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FALL 2021

University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies



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EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Marina Parada
SONHS Senior
Business Officer

Rosa M. Lamazares-Romero
SONHS Assistant Director,
Communications + Marketing

Robin Shear
SONHS Senior Editor

WRITERS

Maya Bell
Samira Navas Luces
Yolanda Mancilla
Maggie Van Dyke

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HIGHLIGHTING MENTAL HEALTH

Welcome to the Fall 2021 issue of *Heartbeat!* With this issue, we mark an exciting step forward for our institution and community. University of Miami students, staff, and faculty are back on campus more fully than we have been since March 2020. As we make this welcome advance, we recognize that our path to the future has changed.

COVID-19 has altered not only our physical landscape, but our psychic landscape too. Natural and manmade disasters have further exacerbated already-heightened stress levels. Across the board—from world-class athletes and frontline workers to schoolchildren and airline passengers—mental health has become a focal point for concern. Counselors are inundated with calls. There is a shortage of mental health professionals, and existing practitioners are under great strain. Significantly more people are acknowledging their struggles with depression, anxiety, addiction, and other mental health matters.

For these reasons, we felt it was important to highlight mental health in our Fall 2021 issue. Even in the darkest times, there is hope for light. Our school has been addressing mental health issues for several years. Please read about our outstanding psychiatric-mental health nursing post-master’s program in our cover story on page 18 to learn why its popularity has soared in recent years and how our specially trained nurse practitioners are tackling our community’s critical needs.

SONHS faculty are leading research focused on mental health issues and interventions. The mental health of Latinx/Hispanic adolescents at the local, national, and global level, for example, is a prime driver of the long-running Familias Unidas project. Learn how this forward-thinking intervention—featured on page 12—is targeting new outcomes from its new home at SONHS.



Like Hispanic youth, family caregivers are disproportionately burdened by psychological stressors. On page 24, discover the innovative approach one enterprising faculty member is taking to ease their burden. The robust content in our new issue of *Heartbeat* also sheds light on two bold new campaigns: Ever Brighter: The Campaign for Our Next Century and the introduction of our S.H.A.R.E.™ brand, on pages 22 and 26, respectively.

Finally, as we come together to learn, innovate, and transform, our top priority remains the health—and mental health—of our entire community. While

we are grateful to reconnect face-to-face (or mask-to-mask, for now), our immense gratitude is bound to a strong sense of responsibility for our collective well-being. In the spirit of ‘Canes Care for ‘Canes, we are all better off when we look after, respect, and support one another. As President Frenk says, “We are one U!”

Cindy L. Munro
Ph.D., R.N., A.N.P.-B.C., F.A.A.N., F.A.A.N.P., F.A.A.A.S.
Dean and Professor

Mission Statement

At the School of Nursing and Health Studies, we transform lives and health care through education, research, innovation, and service across the hemisphere.

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CCNE-Accredited into 2031

Four nursing programs granted 10-year accreditation

The baccalaureate degree program in nursing, master's degree program in nursing, Doctor of Nursing Practice program, and post-graduate APRN certificate program at the University of Miami is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), www.ccneaccreditation.org.

The CCNE Board of Commissioners granted accreditation to the baccalaureate degree program in nursing, master's degree program in nursing, Doctor of Nursing Practice program, and post-graduate APRN certificate program administered by the UM School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) for a period of 10 years, extending to June 30, 2031.

The CCNE Board determined that each program met all four national accreditation standards. The first three standards fall under "program quality": mission and governance, institutional commitment and resources, curriculum and teaching-learning practices. The final standard, assessment and achievement of program outcome, relates to program effectiveness. The programs were considered using the CCNE Standards for Accreditation of Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs (2018).

"This maximum time period for accreditation granted by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education is testament to our stellar faculty, staff, students, and programs at the School of Nursing and Health Studies," says SONHS Dean and Professor Cindy L. Munro. "I want to thank John Clochesy, professor and director of Evaluation and Strategic Initiatives, for leading



this effort, as well express my appreciation for the SONHS leadership and faculty, our Steering Committee members, key participants, and many other contributors. You all paved the way for our excellence to shine through, from the self-study to site visit to accreditation report. This timely and welcome news will help ensure our upward trajectory well into the future."

The CCNE is an autonomous national accreditation agency, recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education, that contributes to the improvement of the public's health by ensuring the quality and integrity of baccalaureate, graduate, and residency programs in nursing across the United States.

Visit www.sonhs.miami.edu/academics/accreditation for more information on SONHS accreditation status.

Fit-Tested for Student Safety

In preparation for fall clinical rotations, SONHS and UM Environmental Health and Safety personnel worked together to test up to 285 undergraduate nursing students with properly fitting N95 masks. The students donned one of five mask styles available, then were connected to a PortaCount® Respirator Fit Tester machine, which generates particles from saltwater. "If the student breathes more than 5 percent of the particles sampled in the mask by the machine, the machine will register a failure," explains Ruth Everett-Thomas, assistant dean for simulation programs at S.H.A.R.E. - Simulation Hospital Advancing Research and Education™. Properly fitted N95 respirator masks worn and replaced according to



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines are designed to filter out at least 95 percent of airborne particles, making them key in preventing COVID-19 and other contaminants from spreading in health care settings.

Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Associate Dean Nichole Crenshaw takes on key role at University of Miami

As associate provost for diversity, equity, and inclusion, Nichole Crenshaw, D.N.P. '14, APRN, AGACNP-BC, ANP-BC, CHSE, FAANP, is responsible for developing innovative initiatives, systems, and programming to support recruitment, retention, and career development of underrepresented minorities and women at the University of Miami, explains Guillermo "Willy" Prado, Ph.D., vice provost for faculty affairs, Graduate School dean, and School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) professor. The Office of Faculty Affairs Leadership announced the leadership appointment effective July 1.

"At a time when racial justice issues are at the forefront, I am excited to be in a position where I can facilitate genuine and candid dialogue about the issues of diversity and inclusion at the University," says Crenshaw, the associate dean for Undergraduate Nursing Programs and an associate professor of clinical at SONHS. "I look forward to collaborating with others at UM and taking deliberate actions to build a diverse, inclusive, and equitable community, where, as stated in our roadmap, all members of the University community feel valued and can add value."

"Nichole is committed to mentoring, diversity and inclusion, and serving the University faculty," says Prado, who recruited her to the position. "I came to know Nichole a few years ago in her role as the School of Nursing and Health Studies' representative on the Graduate



Council, which I chair. I was immediately impressed by her leadership abilities. Nichole was incredibly engaged, thoughtful, and inclusive. She was just a natural choice."

Crenshaw sees her new role as a natural and important extension of her

"At a time when racial justice issues are at the forefront, I am excited to be in a position where I can facilitate genuine and candid dialogue about diversity and inclusion at the University."

work on the Dean's Special Advisory Committee on Faculty Diversity at SONHS. Cindy L. Munro, dean and professor at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, agrees. "I am confident that Dr. Crenshaw's work will be central to the enhancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University of Miami, and will directly benefit the entire University community, including the SONHS," says Dean Munro.

Crenshaw, who will work closely with Prado and Tatiana Perrino, Psy.D., associate provost for faculty development, succeeds the position's inaugural appointee, Osamudia James, formerly of Miami Law. The role Crenshaw now occupies was established as part of a 15-point plan announced last July by UM President Julio Frenk to support racial equality, inclusion, and justice across UM and the South Florida community.

Crenshaw, who joined SONHS in 2013, has taught and mentored hundreds of students, nurses, and nurse practitioners, proving herself a leader in advancing simulation-based education to bridge the gap between didactic instruction and clinical practice. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing from Florida International University, followed by her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree and post-master's certificate at SONHS.

In addition to maintaining academic teaching, research, and leadership roles, Crenshaw practices in Jackson Memorial Hospital's cardiothoracic/surgical intensive care unit. She was recently inducted as a Fellow of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (FAANP). She and her husband, a graduate of Miami Law, have three children, two of whom are UM students.

Aiding Recovery in Moderate TBI Patients

Ph.D. student awarded Society of Trauma Nurses grant to advance symptom science of traumatic brain injury

Kathryn Gerber, a Ph.D. in Nursing Science student at the School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS), was recently awarded a grant from the professional nonprofit organization the Society of Trauma Nurses for her proposal, “Neuroinflammatory biomarkers, symptoms, and functional outcomes in individuals with moderate traumatic brain injury.”

Traumatic brain injury, or TBI, is classified as either mild, moderate, or severe. To date, notes Gerber, individuals with moderate TBI have been understudied, and their symptoms poorly defined, especially during the critical convalescence period, 3 to 12 months post-injury.

Gerber, the study’s principal investigator (PI), plans to address this knowledge gap by providing insight into the relationship between relevant symptoms and disability. “Our findings will enable more appropriate, evidence-based care to be given to patients who have experienced a traumatic mechanism, namely TBI, and additionally will help guide trauma nurses in their clinical practice to better understand the connection between symptoms and functional outcomes in TBI patients and anticipate plan of care,” she says. “Longer-term, our findings may help biomarkers be incorporated into



clinical guidelines and inform future intervention development.”

Gerber will document the frequency and severity of physical, cognitive, and emotional symptoms of 125 study participants diagnosed with a moderate TBI sustained within the past 3 to 12 months and investigate the relationship between frequency and severity of moderate TBI symptoms and functional outcomes for patients, such as independence, disability, and quality of life. She will also examine the extent to which four neuroinflammatory blood biomarkers previously implicated in TBI (IL-6, S-100 β , RAGE, and GFAP) moderate the relationship between symptoms and functional outcomes for study participants.

The site for Gerber’s study is UHealth/Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami. She will use the SONHS Biobehavioral Research Lab to analyze neuroinflammatory biomarkers in the blood of study participants. Members of the multidisciplinary research team from SONHS include Gerber’s Ph.D. advisor, Charles Downs, Ph.D., ACNP-BC, an

associate professor (nurse scientist); Victoria Behar-Zusman (psychologist), Ph.D., associate dean for research and professor; and statistical expert for the study, Arsham Alamian, Ph.D., M.Sc., FACE, associate dean for Health Studies and associate professor. Serving as mentors and consultants on the grant are Gemayaret Alvarez-Gonzalez, M.D., medical director of neuro rehabilitation at Jackson Health System’s Christine E. Lynn Rehabilitation Center, and TBI expert Jessica Gill, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, a senior investigator with the National Institute of Nursing Research/Johns Hopkins University.

“Exposure to different faculty research initiatives as both a research assistant and lab team member at the School of Nursing and Health Studies has helped me obtain research skills and refine my own area of interest,” says Gerber. “I’m grateful to SONHS and the Society of Trauma Nurses for investing in my research and am hopeful I can contribute meaningfully to the scientific literature in TBI, which can improve outcomes for rehabilitating patients.”

Prize-Winning Prose

Nurse anesthesia student wins national writing award from AANA for paper addressing post-surgical pain management

Laura Garcia Ramirez, a third-year nurse anesthesia student at the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS), was selected by the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology (AANA) Education Committee as the 2021 AANA student writing contest winner for her submission *Acute and Chronic Post-Thoracotomy Neuropathic Pain: At-Risk Population, Prevention, and Treatment*. The writing award was announced in the AANA’s “SRNA Digest” and published on the national organization’s website in August.

Garcia Ramirez, a trauma- and critical care-certified RN, selected the topic to address the clinical issue of patients who suffer from chronic pain following thoracic surgery. “Thoracotomies have chronic pain prevalence as high as 91 percent,” explains Garcia Ramirez, who noticed during her rotation at a local hospital where many thoracic surgeries were done that chronic pain prevention strategies for patients undergoing these procedures were rarely mentioned or implemented. “It is a true clinical issue, so I decided to continue researching it and help disseminate information to nurse anesthetists and students.”

Despite comorbidities that make it difficult to institute analgesia regimens for thoracic surgery patients, “anesthesia providers working alongside surgeons can identify patients at risk for acute and chronic neuropathic pain preoperatively in order to instill interventions intraoperatively and provide early treatment options,” notes Garcia Ramirez, who has been working on the topic of post-thoracotomy neuropathic pain for two years under the mentorship of Greta Mitzova-Vladinov, D.N.P. ’13, CRNA, CHSE,



APRN, associate professor of clinical and associate director of the nurse anesthesia program at SONHS.

Instead of a single preventative strategy, Garcia Ramirez recommends a multimodal approach. “Each patient is unique,” notes Garcia Ramirez, who first presented on the topic during the 2020 AANA Annual Congress.

Set to graduate this December, Garcia Ramirez credits her coauthor and mentor Mitzova-Vladinov; Juan E. Gonzalez, Ph.D., CRNA, professor of clinical and director of the nurse anesthesia program; and Nicole Gonzaga Gomez, D.N.P., M.S., CRNA, ARNP, assistant professor of clinical, for their unwavering support throughout her time at SONHS.

“This is the first time a SONHS student has been selected for this honor,” says Mitzova-Vladinov, AANA’s incoming

Simulation Sub-committee chair. “Dr. Gonzalez and I, along with the rest of Laura’s faculty and peers, are so proud of her accomplishment. In addition to being a skillful writer, Laura has been an AANA Foundation Student Advocate for the past two years, serving as a liaison between the Foundation and the SONHS Nurse Anesthesia Program to promote scholarship and professional growth among her colleagues.”

Mitzova-Vladinov also spotlights the accomplishment of second-year nurse anesthesia student Nicholas Badali, whose poster, *Anesthesia Considerations for Leadless Pacemakers*, received the most online views during this year’s virtual AANA Congress, she says.

‘Open for Discussion’

Innovation in Teaching awardee takes public health topics to new and exciting realms

Andrew Porter, Ph.D., wants his students to feel like they’ve been invited into a conversation—one where no subject is off limits. An assistant professor of public health at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, he excels at getting students to open up about topics that can be sensitive or difficult, including race, racism, LGBT+ issues, homophobia, and privilege.

Porter’s prowess in the classroom has not gone unnoticed. This September he was recognized with the Provost’s new Innovation in Teaching Award for his “outstanding commitment to the student learning process” and for making a “demonstrable difference in learning outcomes,” specifically in relation to three of his most popular courses, Human Sexuality in Vulnerable Populations, Issues in Health Disparities, and Global Health.

“As soon as I started teaching, I wanted to make sure everybody in every one of my classes knew that I cared about what they said. I was never going to put them down. There was no such thing as an out of place comment, nothing out of bounds. Everything is open for discussion,” Porter explains.

This authentic approach resonates with students, who voted Porter SONHS Teacher of the Year in 2017. His Human Sexuality course consistently has long waitlists. Public health and nursing students in the class team up on a range of assignments, such as creating sex-positive health messages for the social media site of Porter’s popular sexual health podcast, The Sex Wrap, which has over a million listeners. The project encourages students to dialogue with people worldwide, explains Porter.



Dr. Andrew Porter

For Health Disparities, Porter recently started a book club, selecting 13 books by Black authors for their focus on social justice issues. To inspire meaningful conversations, he assigned small groups to lead interactive discussions on each book. “Dr. Porter takes an innovative approach to reaching people where they’re at,” says former student Kristiana Yao, B.S.P.H. ’18, B.B.A. ’18. “I saw such high levels of engagement from my peers, even on really sensitive topics.”



For his Global Health class, Porter addressed what he calls the “U.S.-centric perspective” of many students by assigning everyone in class to research, analyze, and present data on key public health indicators like the environment, communicable disease, nutrition, health

systems, women’s health, and LGBT issues for their assigned nation. The assignment culminated in a narrative paper about an individual or family from the assigned country. “Instead of another stat-filled research paper, students were making connections and talking about real issues that people face worldwide,” says Porter.

As one student admitted in an evaluation: “I hated writing the story at first, but by the end of the paper, I finally understood what it was like to grow up in Bangladesh.” According to other evaluations, Porter’s students overwhelmingly report feeling better prepared to be health professionals and to handle difficult or delicate conversations on a range of complex topics.

Porter shares his passion for innovative education with University of Miami faculty too, as a mentor for the recently launched Platform for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (PETAL). “Pedagogy is about inviting students into a conversation,” he says. “It’s about finding effective ways to get students to talk with me and each other, and then getting them to engage with the materials in new and different ways.”

Trio of ‘Stars’ Shines at Sigma

Three SONHS students invited to present posters virtually at Sigma’s 32nd International Nursing Research Congress

Yue “Coco” Dong, Cristobal Padilla Fortunatti, and Giselle Garcia-Rivero represented the University of Miami’s Beta Tau Chapter of Sigma, the international honor society of nursing, during Sigma’s 32nd International Nursing Research Congress, July 21 to 23, held virtually due to COVID-19 precautions. The trio contributed to the annual conference’s “Rising Stars of Research and Scholarship Invited Student Posters,” joining virtual presenters from over two dozen universities in North America, Asia, and the Middle East.

Dong, B.S.N. ’21, presented the poster *Health Promotion and Prevention of Alzheimer’s Disease*. Dong, who plans to pursue her doctoral degree, gained experience at SONHS as a research assistant on projects related to dementia and epigenetics.



Cristobal Padilla Fortunatti

Sigma Rising Star Padilla Fortunatti, an assistant clinical professor at Pontificia Universidad Católica’s school of nursing in Chile, recently defended his dissertation as a Ph.D. in Nursing Science student at SONHS. He coauthored his Sigma conference poster—*Exploring the Association of Psychological Distress, Social Support, and Family Satisfaction Among ICU Family Members*—with his mentor, Cindy L. Munro, SONHS dean and professor. To gather evidence of the experience



Yue “Coco” Dong

of family members during a patient’s intensive care unit (ICU) stay, the research team collected questionnaires from 63 family members of non-COVID-19 ICU patients. Main findings suggest that family members of ICU patients with higher levels of stress and low social support have lower satisfaction with the ICU care for both the patient and the family members. An early screening of psychosocial variables among ICU family members, as well as throughout the ICU stay, may contribute to identifying and supporting those family members at risk of a poor ICU experience.

Giselle Garcia-Rivero’s Rising Star poster addressed an issue close to her heart, both as a health care professional and a mother: *Improving Access to Breastfeeding Support Among Minority Women*. “Breastfeeding provides health benefits that can be appreciated immediately, such as reduced incidence of digestive issues, respiratory infections, and complications from these infections in infants, just to name a few,” says Garcia-Rivero, who recently gave birth to and is breastfeeding her third child. She cites evidence that quality lactation support is one way to significantly improve a mother’s confidence and long-term breastfeeding success.

“Minority women enrolled in Medicaid have lower income and experience

greater health care and health disparities. Breastfeeding support is essential, but for these mothers in particular, not easily available or accessible,” explains Garcia-Rivero, a D.N.P. student currently implementing a breastfeeding support quality improvement project with The Women’s Hospital at Jackson Memorial Hospital. “Anticipated results of this project include passage of legislation for state professional licensure of certified lactation consultants. The expectation is that this would contribute to significantly improved breastfeeding statistics due to improved access to essential lactation support.”



Giselle Garcia-Rivero

This was the first Sigma Congress Rising Star presentation for all three invited participants. The school’s Karen S. Muth Memorial Nursing Leaders Endowed Program Fund covered their event registration.

“We are grateful to the family of Karen Muth, B.S.N. ’85, for supporting these future nurse leaders,” says Dean Munro. “I am so proud of the way in which our nominees and their high-caliber research represented our school at this prestigious international conference.”

To support the Karen S. Muth Memorial Nursing Leaders Endowed Program Fund, call 305-284-1785 or email pmetcal@miami.edu.

Vaccine Advocacy: 5 Questions with Dean Munro

Since COVID-19 began disrupting all facets of life, free shots administered to uninsured children for measles, whooping cough, hepatitis, and other preventable and deadly diseases plummeted by nearly 15 million doses. Compared to pre-pandemic levels, routine vaccinations for U.S. residents of all ages have dipped by 20 percent this year alone, with shots for young adults through age 49 and those 65 and older plunging by more than 40 percent. “Alarming” is how Cindy Munro, dean and professor of the School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS), describes statistics presented at a recent National Foundation for Infectious Diseases webinar. The numbers—culled from the national Vaccines for Children program and more than 7,000 primary care providers in 25 states served by the VaxCare network—show why immunization awareness “has never been more relevant,” says Dean Munro, a member of the International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame who developed a patented vaccine to prevent streptococcal endocarditis.

What's the danger in missing or forgoing routine vaccinations? If you are not fully vaccinated, you are susceptible to a number of preventable diseases and you are part of the problem in spreading transmissible ones to others. It's not only about you. It's about your role as a good citizen, as a good member of society, as a good neighbor. And here's the beauty of vaccines: They require such a small investment of a person's time and effort. It's not like trying to lose weight or change your lifestyle. All that's required is allowing yourself to be vaccinated. Your immune system will do the rest.

According to the CDC, vaccines for 26 different diseases, from adenovirus to yellow fever, are available in the U.S. How should adults decide which vaccines they need? While children have fairly rigid schedules of when to



Robert Klemm

get which vaccinations, adults don't, so, they're easy to forget. Vaccines for adults also differ by age. But everybody should get an influenza vaccine every year and a tetanus shot every 10 years—plus those vaccines recommended for their age group. For example, there's an improved dual-dose shingles vaccine recommended for healthy people older than 50, and almost anyone who has had shingles would say they wished they had the shots. It's a horrifically painful disease with all kinds of complications. You can even lose your eyesight. Yet the complications from the vaccine are miniscule.

Is that the case with all vaccines—the benefits far outweigh the risks? Every vaccine has some risk associated with it, but the risk for the general population is much smaller than that of actually having the disease. Otherwise, the vaccine would not be approved for use. And the benefits are enormous—not just for society at large, but there are many personal and economic benefits. Think about it: If you like to travel, you need vaccines to visit various foreign countries. And, remember chickenpox before the vaccine? It would sweep through elementary schools, and someone had to stay home with all those kids. So, kids lost school time and parents lost work time. Vaccines provide a huge economic benefit that we don't really think about.

Many health systems have been requiring health care workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19—over some strong objections. Do you support the mandates, particularly for nurses? I support the mandates, especially for nurses. Our standard requirement for nursing students going into clinical settings is that they are vaccinated for measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, varicella (chickenpox), tetanus, and diphtheria, and that they get a flu shot every year. There's no reason COVID-19 should be treated as an outlier in that obligation. Just like we have an ethical responsibility to wear gloves in health care settings so that we don't transmit infection, we have an ethical responsibility to do all those things within our control that reduce risk to patients, and vaccination is one of them.

But aren't some concerns valid; for example, that COVID-19 vaccines were rushed to market and initially authorized only for emergency use? Just like it's much faster to make a computer chip these days than it was with antiquated 1950s technology, the COVID-19 vaccine development process was faster because our technology is better. COVID-19 vaccines are based very much on work that's gone before. This emergency gave us a lot more funding and more scientific minds working on the same problems. It was a very concentrated and successful effort. For that I am grateful, and everybody else should be too—not only for the COVID-19 vaccines, but for all the other vaccines that have improved our lives, like vaccines for hepatitis and the human papillomavirus (HPV) that could keep our children from developing liver or cervical cancer as adults. Yet 1.6 million fewer girls were vaccinated against HPV last year. As the World Health Organization says, clean water and vaccines are the two most impactful things affecting human health. You wouldn't drink dirty water, so don't neglect your vaccinations.

‘Empowered through Science’

Prestigious NIH program prepares diverse participants for bright futures in health disparities research



Pictured, from left: Dr. Ortega, MHRT grantee Stefan Williams, Dean Cindy Munro, MHRT grantee Brandie Bentley, and MHRT program director Karina Gattamorta.

Each year, applicants from around the United States vie for spots in the prestigious Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Training program (MHRT), administered by the School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) with competitive grant funding from the National Institutes of Health's National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD).

This summer's gifted grantees included a public health undergraduate from SONHS, a Cuban-born biology/Spanish major at the University of Miami, a University of Puerto Rico doctor of dentistry student, M.P.H. students from Georgia and Maryland, a Peruvian health care interpreter and embryologist, Ph.D. candidates studying disparities at universities in Illinois and North Carolina, and a future molecular physiologist headed to Harvard for postdoctoral research.

The aim of MHRT is to improve health disparities research by improving representation of research scientists from racial and ethnic minorities, socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, and rural areas in the biomedical, clinical, or social sciences. “Our participants are some of tomorrow's most promising health disparities scientists,” explains Johis Ortega, Ph.D., APRN, ACNP-BC, ENP-BC, FNP-BC, FAAN, FAANP, associate dean for Hemispheric and Global Initiatives at SONHS and

the grant's principal investigator. “The MHRT program provides grantees hands-on opportunities to work with noted international researchers. The experience is intended to open their eyes to new cultures, populations, and career possibilities.”

During 10-week research placements, the members of this year's MHRT cohort were paired with prominent research scientists from Miami, Latin America, and the Caribbean addressing a range of important health issues, such as arboviruses in Costa Rica, cannabis use and chronic disease in U.S. and Jamaican minority populations, and cardiovascular disease prevention in Colombia.

New this year was a partnership with the Universidad de Costa Rica's noted Centro de Investigación de Enfermedades Tropicales (Center for the Investigation of Tropical Diseases), or CIET, where two grantees were placed. One of those grantees, Jennifer Francisco, a Doctor in Dental Medicine student at the University of Puerto Rico, helped a CIET research team study antibody neutralization profiles in human and wildlife sera against arboviruses like Zika.

“It is very important how programs like MHRT allow minorities to participate in high-quality research, but most importantly to work alongside members of other

underrepresented communities,” says Francisco. “This aspect will allow us to feel empowered through science and promote the development of knowledge that will put us one step closer to equity.”

Other grantees gained exposure to collaborative research training, domestic and international health issues, and health disparities research initiatives with mentors from the University of Miami, Universidad de Los Andes in Colombia, the Jamaica-based University of the West Indies, and Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra in the Dominican Republic. Travel restrictions related to the pandemic required some grantees to participate virtually or in a hybrid fashion.



All grantees participated in a Global Health Disparities Summer Research Institute, a seminar on research dissemination and preparing for a career in health disparities research, and a writing workshop, and are expected to continue working with their mentors in order to publish findings from their experience.

Visit <https://mhrt.sonhs.miami.edu> or email mhrt@miami.edu for more information. This grant is supported by the National Institute on Minority Health And Health Disparities of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number T37MD008647. The content of this article is solely the responsibility of the issuing institution and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

Familias Unidas Comes of Age

This adolescent behavioral intervention for Latinx families has gone from pilot, to evaluation, to dissemination, growing and evolving by staying culturally connected and creative after more than 20 years.

By Yolanda Mancilla



Fifteen-year-old Gabi has been waiting for her mom, Cecilia, to come home from her job as a caregiver. Gabi's worried about her 13-year-old brother, Darwin, who's been skipping school. When Cecilia arrives late and tired, Gabi joins her on the couch.

"Mami, we have to talk."

"You always choose the worst moments!"

"I don't choose them; they're the only chance I have. You're always in a hurry or tired."

"Okay, tell me what's bothering you."

"It's not me, it's Darwin. It looks like –"

"Gabriela, I'm sorry m'ija, but I'm dead tired. Tomorrow I have to take Doña Silvia to the radiologist super early. We'll talk another time, OK?"

"Yeah, sure. Another time."

Frustrated and dejected, Gabi sits at her laptop and messages Ramiro, an older man she met on a dating app.

"OK, Ramiro. We're on. When do you want to see me?"

Heading off to bed, Cecilia has no idea Darwin's about to be suspended from school or that Gabi's planning to meet up with Ramiro.

Gabi and Cecilia are fictional characters in a telenovela that has been watched by hundreds of parents participating in the online version of Familias Unidas (United Families), an evidence-based prevention program for Latinx parents and their 12-to-16-year-old adolescents. Over eight episodes, the story dramatizes problems that stem from a lack of effective communication between parents and teens.

Familias Unidas was co-developed as a face-to-face intervention more than 20 years ago by a team of researchers under the direction of Professor Guillermo “Willy” Prado, Ph.D., who also serves as the University of Miami’s vice provost for faculty affairs and Graduate School dean. Seeking to address factors associated with substance use and HIV sexual risk behaviors among Latinx adolescents, the team worked to empower parents with skills to improve family functioning.

The intervention builds on an ecosystemic model that targets the adolescent’s “three worlds” – family, friends, and school. Over twelve weeks, groups of parents meet eight times to explore each of these worlds. Through a participatory process, facilitators elicit parents’ stories and teach them strategies to communicate effectively with their adolescents, monitor their behavior and schoolwork, and protect them from peer pressure to smoke, drink alcohol, use drugs, or engage in unsafe sexual activities. During four family sessions, facilitators coach parents as they practice new communication skills with their teens.

“Familias Unidas also addresses Hispanic cultural values, acculturation, and stress,” says Prado, who holds faculty appointments in the School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS), as well as the departments of Public Health Sciences and Psychology. “It’s very culturally syntonc.”

“The parents have a great deal in common,” adds long-time clinical supervisor and trainer María Tapia, Ph.D. “They arrive complaining that their kids are getting into trouble

and speaking disrespectfully. They don’t know what to do or how to communicate.”

Tapia, who has trained more than 250 facilitators and currently supervises 100 in the U.S. and Latin America, knows building a supportive network among parents is essential to the program’s success. “They share problems and stories and realize they aren’t alone,” she explains. “They say, ‘the other parents gave me support, relief, tools, and skills.’”

The highly regarded intervention has been delivered in more than 40 middle and high schools throughout Miami-Dade County. But no matter where it’s been implemented, parents affirm that learning to communicate with their teens was one of their most valued outcomes.

“We learned how to draw closer to our kids so they’re able to share the things they’re holding inside,” says parent participant Lidiana Baster. “With these strategies it’s easy to help them.”

As they learn about the developmental and societal challenges teens face, parents begin to understand how best to apply the communication strategies they’re learning.

“It’s not enough to tell us ‘this is wrong, fix it’ – you need to teach us what to do,” explains “Marta García,”* another parent participant. “It’s a difficult age; parents are seen as an obstacle, like we’re always going to say no. I learned how to approach my daughter so she won’t see me that way.”

“My son has changed in how he reaches out to me and shares his problems,” agrees Baster. “I feel he’s broken through that barrier and there’s a lot more communication.”

“I liked the program because it teaches you how to interact with your family,” adds Baster’s son Brandon Raymond. “It was easier for me to explain things to my mom.”

Across multiple randomized trials, Familias Unidas has been shown to

significantly improve family functioning and communication, reduce cigarette and alcohol use, and increase condom use. The intervention has been recognized by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the National Institute of Justice. According to the prestigious Blueprints Registry, it is one of only 54 interventions meeting the strictest scientific standard of evidence, and the only one recognized for Latinx youth. The intervention has also been cited by the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine) as an evidence-based intervention ready for wide-scale dissemination.

Going Virtual with ‘eHealth Familias Unidas’

In 2012, the team began testing an online adaptation of Familias Unidas in partnership with the University of Miami School of Communication. Parents watch the telenovela and follow the lives of Cecilia, Gabi, and their family and friends, who are portrayed by professional actors. The scripts were written by Luis Santeiro, the Cuban-American playwright known for the classic 1970s public television sitcom *¿Qué Pasa, USA?*

“The telenovela resonates with Hispanic families because it’s syntonc with our culture; we all grew up watching them,” says assistant scientist and director of research Yannine Estrada, Ph.D., who served as principal investigator of the CDC-funded “eHealth” online adaptation under Prado’s mentorship. “Parents love it. Each episode maps on to one of the intervention topics and ends with a cliffhanger that engages parents to watch the next one. Some even binge watch.”

The telenovela is followed by a video featuring Tapia facilitating a parent group. To ensure a participatory experience, Tapia introduces interactive exercises for parents watching at home. Using a telehealth model, facilitators



also coach parents through four live family sessions.

Prado is currently principal investigator of a study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to help primary care centers across South Florida build capacity to implement “eHealth Familias Unidas” on their own. “The online format offers greater accessibility, flexibility, and convenience, making it easier for parents everywhere to participate,” says Estrada. “It also supports wider dissemination to communities beyond South Florida.”

National and Hemispheric Impact

As Familias Unidas has gained visibility, it has generated appeals to bring the intervention to communities across the United States and Latin America. Building on an impressive platform of evidence and recognition, Prado and his

team are disseminating Familias Unidas into real-world settings. “We’re taking the intervention out of the research lab and translating it to practice,” he explains.

Tapia has trained and supervised clinicians implementing Familias Unidas in Providence, Rhode Island, and Chester County, Pennsylvania, nurturing strong community partnerships. Now, the team is preparing to disseminate the program in Brooklyn and Rochester, New York.

“Familias Unidas has filled a great void in parent-adolescent relationships, bringing tools that have enriched their communication,” says Luis Rodríguez, master trainer and clinical supervisor at CYC (Children and Youth Cabinet) in Providence. “It has empowered many parents from our Hispanic community.”

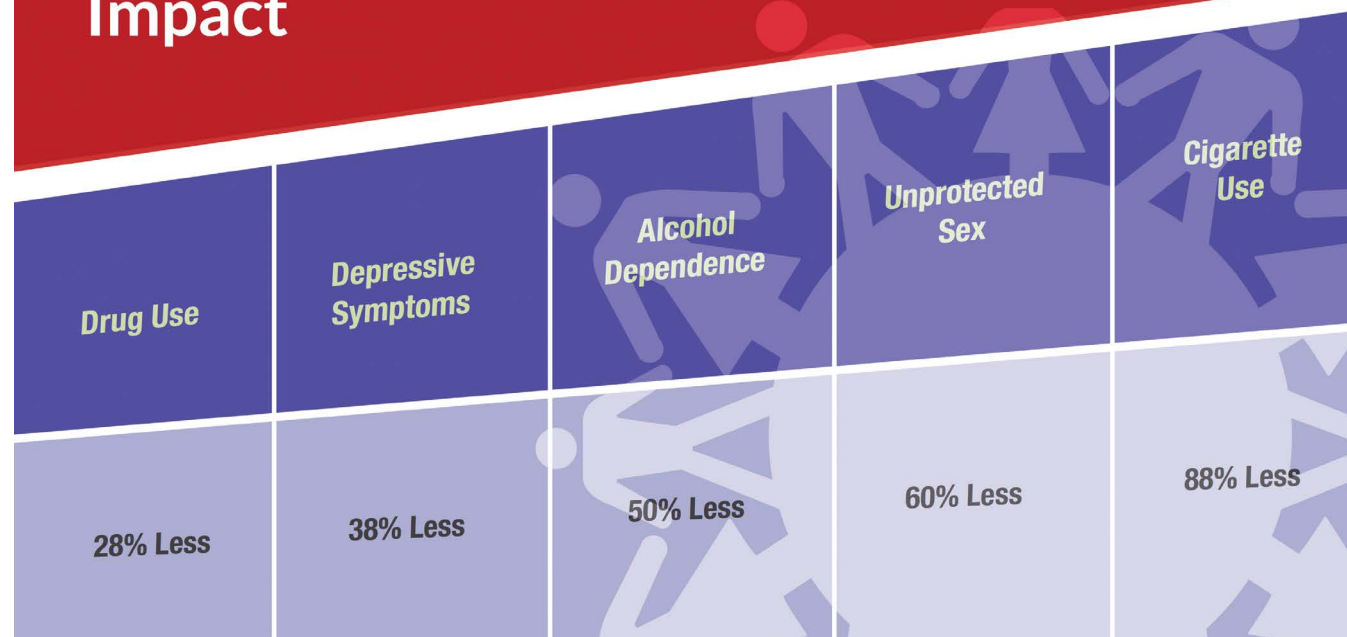
“We’re amazed by the incredible outcomes for our families,” adds Johnna Goodridge, director of prevention for

Family Service of Chester County. “I have yet to see a program with such impactful dynamics in family functioning. Familias Unidas has become our number one resource in serving our Hispanic community.”

Because the team transitioned Familias Unidas to an online platform years ago, they were well-positioned to continue delivering the program during the COVID-19 pandemic. “We’re especially grateful that the University of Miami’s dedicated team led the way for us to offer Familias Unidas online since the start of the pandemic,” says Goodridge. “It provided a lifeline for many of our families in the face of stress and isolation.”

In 2019, the Chilean government officially adopted Familias Unidas as a prevention program for families with at-risk adolescents. Delivered through Sistema Lazos, a program of the undersecretary for crime prevention, Familias Unidas is being implemented in 20 communities

An Evidence-Based Intervention with Impact



across Chile, with a goal of 40 by 2022. “Familias Unidas has significantly impacted thousands of families since its large-scale implementation in Chile,” says Marcelo Sánchez Ahumada, managing director of the San Carlos de Maipo Foundation and principal investigator of Familias Unidas en Chile. “It has become public policy in our country as an intervention proven to positively impact the lives of Chilean adolescents and their families.”

To date, Familias Unidas has also reached families in Central America and Ecuador. The intervention’s success in Chile demonstrates its immense potential to impact families and public policy on a hemispheric scale.

New Horizons

Familias Unidas continues evolving to address community needs. With rates of overweight and obesity among Hispanics climbing to alarming levels, in 2016 Prado and his team developed Familias Unidas for Health and Wellness, which led to an NIH-funded randomized trial of 280 families in partnership with Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation. Sessions focused on preventing obesity through diet and physical activity, and families learned healthier ways to prepare

traditional Latin American meals.

Last year, Prado and his team collaborated with Behar-Zusman, Ph.D., SONHS professor and associate dean for research, to begin focusing on the needs of sexual minority youth, an at-risk population with high rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide ideation. A grant from the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center funded formative research to pilot test the new intervention, called Familias con Orgullo (Families with Pride), which addresses parent-adolescent communication, emotional regulation, and managing the coming out process.

“It’s the first family intervention for Latinx sexual minority youth who have recently disclosed to their parents,” says Prado. “This is a population where there is so much need. Almost 50 percent of kids in our pilot study reported suicide ideation, and many reported suicide attempts.”

Life-Changing Outcomes

Familias Unidas has undergone a remarkable 20-year journey from a face-to-face intervention in schools to

an online program accessible to families everywhere that can be adapted to meet emerging needs. But those who know him best say the journey couldn’t have happened without Prado’s unique brand of collaborative leadership. They are quick to praise his dedication to mentoring and to ensuring the team’s ongoing professional development.

“Dr. Prado is a wonderful mentor to staff and students, and always credits the success of Familias Unidas to his team,” says Tapia. “He allows us to work independently, but we rely on his leadership and vision. We have *confianza*—we trust and care about each other.”

“He holds us to high standards and motivates us to do the hard work, and he values our input and puts it into action,” adds Estrada. “But he’s also lively and energetic, and he makes it fun for us.”

The journey has led Prado and his team to a new home at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, where they are ready to take Familias Unidas in new directions. With Prado at the helm, they will continue adapting the intervention to address generational changes and emerging community and hemispheric needs.

Prado was recently awarded a four-year, \$3.05 million NIH grant to assess eHealth Familias Unidas for Mental Health in real-world clinical settings with an eye toward sustainability (see sidebar).

The study will use a new iteration of the telenovela, and the team is adapting the original scripts to include more explicit conversations about adolescent anxiety, depression, and suicidality. Two award-winning filmmakers at the UM School of Communication, professors Sanjeev Chatterjee and Ed Talavera, will collaborate in the production of the new videos.

“Now that we’re targeting new outcomes and focusing on new populations, we’re re-recording the telenovelas to include mental health, and one of the characters will be a sexual minority youth,” says Prado, a step that will make the telenovela even more relevant and inclusive.

During the final episode of the telenovela, Cecilia joins a Familias Unidas group and learns to communicate with her teens. By then, the real-life parents following her story have been practicing new skills and are beginning to see positive changes. The program is so transformational, parents talk about their lives “before” and “after” Familias Unidas.

“Familias Unidas teaches us how to use our resources, together—which is the name of the program,” says García. “Families get together and—it’s love.”

“I definitely recommend this program and hope it reaches many families,” adds Baster. “Once you know what actually works, your life changes.”

**Not her real name.*

Dr. Prado and SONHS would like to acknowledge the rest of the Familias Unidas team, including research support senior manager María Velázquez, biostatistician Tae Kyoung Lee, doctoral students Alyssa Lozano and Devina Dave, and research assistants María Alfaro and Rosalba Serralta. The Familias Unidas team would also like to thank past research assistants, students, and postdoctoral fellows, as well as community partners, for their contributions. Finally, they want to acknowledge the thousands of families whose participation in this research made possible the program’s dissemination to other cities and families in the U.S. and Latin America.

Fostering Latinx Adolescent Mental Health

Dean Guillermo “Willy” Prado and his longtime collaborator, Northwestern University Professor C. Hendricks Brown, Ph.D., were recently awarded a four-year, \$3.05 million grant from the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute of Mental Health for an effectiveness implementation trial that will bring an enhanced online intervention, “eHealth Familias Unidas for Mental Health,” to 468 Latinx families at 18 primary care sites throughout South Florida. The study will explore whether the clinics are able to deliver the intervention on their own over the long term.

“We know Familias Unidas is effective, so this study is all about implementation,” explains Prado. “We’re looking at sustainment as one of our primary outcomes.”

With a focus on fostering mental health, the study team will also evaluate the intervention’s effectiveness in preventing or reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, suicide ideation and behavior, and drug misuse among Latinx adolescent participants, one of the largest and fastest-growing youth populations in the U.S. They’ll also explore the role parental depression, family communication, and adolescent externalizing behaviors such as drug misuse play in the intervention.



“Interventions designed to interrupt the effects of mental health disorders and other poor outcomes are imperative for maximizing health among Hispanic youth,” says Prado. “Until now, evidence-based preventive interventions such as Familias Unidas and eHealth Familias Unidas have largely been tested in schools and delivered by research staff. Evaluating these interventions in real-world studies of primary care delivered by clinic staff, and understanding the implementation processes that help or hinder their integration in systems, is key to improving mental health and reducing disparities in the U.S.”

For more information about Familias Unidas, call 305-243-2341. Research reported was supported by the National Institute of Mental Health of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number R01MH124718. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

Filling the Mental Health Provider Void

SONHS' certificate program is addressing the urgent need for more psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners

By Maggie Van Dyke

Many Americans who need mental health treatments are going without for a lack of trained providers. During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, 32 percent of American adults who thought they might need such services or treatment did not get them, according to an April 2021 Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) survey. The primary reason—ahead of even cost and time—was accessibility: 24 percent of respondents said they could not find a mental health provider.

As a result, some adults and children suffering from depression, bipolar disorder, and other mental health conditions are waiting weeks to months to see a mental health provider, while others can't find nearby providers who are accepting new patients. COVID-19 has drawn more attention to this mental health workforce shortage as increasing numbers of people report symptoms of depression and anxiety disorders (41 percent in January 2021, compared to 11 percent in 2019, according to another KFF report).

The School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) is addressing this provider shortfall through its Post-Master's Certificate in Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing, a program for nurse practitioners (NPs) interested in pursuing careers as psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners (PMHNPs). "We need more nurse practitioners who can care for the mentally ill," says the program's director Deborah "Debbie" Salani, B.S.N. '86, M.S.N. '89, D.N.P. '12, PMHNP-BC, APRN, an associate professor of clinical. "Our hope is that our students will go into practice and advocate for those vulnerable individuals who don't have a voice."

The United States is short 6,464 psychiatrists, according to data from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, which has set a goal of one psychiatrist for every 30,000 people (or one for every 20,000 in high-need communities).

"PMHNPs are well-positioned to play a vital role in bridging these care and service disparity gaps," explains board-certified PMHNP Horace Ellis, B.S.N. '95. Ellis is a doctorally prepared nurse practitioner and clinical specialist at Miami's Jackson Behavioral Health Hospital, one of eleven established preceptor sites for students in the SONHS post-master's certificate program. Jackson Behavioral Health has tripled the number of PMHNPs on staff from two to six in recent years, says Ellis. "There's always a need for more PMHNPs."

The psychiatric mental health certificate program at SONHS is growing rapidly, helping to fill workforce needs. In 2019, Salani's first year as director, the program graduated 11 students; in 2020, there were 18 graduates. The 2021 class has 32 members enrolled.

Once they pass board exams, PMHNPs are licensed to assess, diagnose, and treat mental health disorders. As NPs, they can prescribe medications. State laws vary on whether and how long NPs must practice under the supervision of a physician. In Florida, PMHNPs can practice autonomously if they've been an NP for five years and complete the necessary requirements.

Graduates of the SONHS program help patients in a variety of settings,



from inpatient psychiatric hospitals to community health networks and substance use disorder programs. In addition, the COVID-19-era boom in psychiatric telehealth services is offering PMHNPs new opportunities to work from home.

Dawn Smith Walsh, who received the student PMHNP award of her 2020 cohort, is fulfilling a lifelong passion to work in mental health. She currently works at a geriatric practice in Tampa with her former SONHS clinical preceptor. "It brings tears to my eyes when I have an 'aha' moment with a patient and [he or she] realizes I'm there to help and not judge," says Smith Walsh, a PMHNP and adult-gerontology nurse practitioner.

A Year in the Life

The SONHS program runs from January to December, packing those 12 months with in-depth classroom learning and intensive patient interactions. "My main goal for the program is to educate our students to be amazing clinicians who are comfortable practicing independently," Salani says.

The 2020 class's performance on the PMHNP board certification exam suggests Salani is attaining her goal. "Our programmatic strategies find high success with our national board

certification pass rate of the 2020 cohort at 100 percent, while the national average is 80 percent," she points out.

Each spring, first-semester students learn about the various mental health disorders and criteria used to diagnose each. "We cover most of the DSM-5 textbook, which is like the Bible of psychiatry," explains Salani, referring to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. "Additionally, the students learn psychopharmacology and other treatment strategies, including therapy, for mental disorders."

Thanks to SONHS' Simulation Hospital Advancing Research and Education (S.H.A.R.E.[™]), instructors have incorporated psychiatric simulations into the PMHNP program as well. For instance, one semester, students had to identify how to diagnose and treat a patient presenting at emergency department with heart palpitations, shortness of breath, nausea, and other symptoms of a panic attack.

PMHNP students also are required to complete 504 clinical hours. In Larkin Community Hospital's South Miami Campus, the PMHNP students rotate through inpatient and outpatient settings, seeing patients in the adult crisis stabilization unit, adolescent inpatient unit, emergency department, and outpatient clinics. They also participate in outpatient therapy sessions.

Preceptor Rene Miguel Hasbun is Larkin's program director for outpatient behavioral health. "The students shadow our residents and the attendings," says Hasbun, a nationally certified, licensed mental health counselor and master's level-certified addiction professional. "When patient's exhibit psychiatric needs, our staff provides a comprehensive evaluation. The psychiatric resident and PMHNP preceptees evaluate the patient together and present the case to the attending, who works with them, asking questions like, 'What do you think the treatment should be?'"

Experiential learning is key to becoming a successful practitioner, notes Ellis. At Jackson Behavioral Health, students conduct psychiatric evaluations, formulate diagnoses and treatment plans, write prescriptions, and assess for medication side effects. "Preceptees learn a great deal during clinical rotations because they are able to transfer what they have learned in theory into practice," says Ellis.

One of the biggest lessons Janella San Juan, B.S.N. '14, a 2020 graduate of the PMHNP certificate program, learned during her clinical rotation at Advent Health Orlando was the importance of listening. "I remember my preceptor told me the best thing to do is to be still and listen to the patient," she recounts. "It's such simple advice, but it can be powerful. We have to always be respectful of patients and give them time to talk."

The UM Draw

SONHS was San Juan's first and only choice for her PMHNP studies. She had completed her undergraduate nursing degree at the University of Miami and valued the education she received. "I knew the nursing education was top-notch and the professors were great," she offers. "It was the only program I applied to."

San Juan's classmate Smith Walsh, a Tampa resident, took a more data-driven route to selecting SONHS, creating a spreadsheet to help her pinpoint the pros and cons of eight post-master's psychiatric mental health certificate programs around the United States. "I chose UM because

the program is succinct yet comprehensive, which is difficult to find," Smith Walsh says, noting that other programs she investigated ranged from 18 months to two years. The hybrid learning structure SONHS offers—with 50 percent of coursework online and the rest conducted in person—was another deciding factor. "UM prepared me quite well!" she says.

"A lot of students have told me that they're thrilled to be a part of UM because it is a very prestigious university," offers Salani, "but the other big selling point is our hybrid approach. They like that the program is not all online. They like to come to campus and network with their classmates."

Another advantage to the SONHS program, which is accredited through 2031 by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, is the range of clinical preceptorships available. Some post-master's certificate programs expect students to schedule their own clinical hours, but Salani has worked hard to line up preceptorships that place all students directly at a variety of clinical sites. This helps ensure that each PMHNP student gains experience in the mental health specialty they are most interested in.

This collaborative approach also benefits the School's clinical partners by helping them train PMHNPs to work with their patient populations and in their care sites, suggests psychiatrist Maria Collado, M.D., clinical director of the adult crisis stabilization unit at Hialeah-based Citrus Health Network, another key placement site for PMHNP students from SONHS. "There is a growing need for well-trained psychiatric-mental health practitioners who understand and have experience with treating patients within a community-based model," says Collado, an assistant professor of clinical medicine for FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine at Citrus Health Network. "We are proud to offer training slots for these professionals and hope to build a career pathway for them."

Making an Impact

Because of their nursing background, PMHNPs bring a needed focus on the whole patient to psychiatric

consultations and treatment. "I like to say that nurse practitioners wear a lot of hats," says San Juan, who has been hired as a PMHNP for a telepsychiatry company in California. "We're not just providing medications. We also educate and sometimes do a little bit of case management. That goes hand in hand with the holistic approach to patient care that has been instilled in us in nursing school."

Smith Walsh shares a story from her preceptorship at a private practice that illustrates the important work of PMHNPs. One of her patients went into a deep depression after having her leg amputated. The woman, who had to stay in the hospital for a long time after the operation, missed her husband terribly and cried continuously. Then a close relative died and the woman was unable to attend the memorial service in person because of her condition. This caused the patient to become severely anxious in addition to being depressed.

To help, Smith Walsh and her clinical partner prescribed a short course of benzodiazepine as well as an antidepressant. Within weeks, the patient had made a remarkable turnaround. "She was in her wheelchair wheeling around the unit and interacting with people," recalls Smith Walsh. The patient had been able to attend the memorial service via Skype and shared screenshots from the event with her. "It's so wonderful when you can help a patient change their perspective and change their story," Smith Walsh says.

Program director Salani, a graduate of the program herself, hopes more nurses who are passionate about caring for those with mental disorders will consider becoming PMHNPs. Her message to them: "You are needed."

Visit sonhs.miami.edu/academics/certificate-programs/psychiatric-mental-health-nurse-practitioner for info on becoming a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner. If you or someone you know is in need of help, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24-hour crisis center, text MHA to 741741, call 911, or go to the nearest emergency room.

Bright Ideas, Ever Brighter Outcomes

New campaign brings University's centennial into sharp focus

By Robin Shear

Ever Brighter

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
THE CAMPAIGN FOR OUR NEXT CENTURY

With its centennial on the horizon in 2025, the University of Miami has ignited its most comprehensive, transformational fundraising campaign to date. **Ever Brighter: The Campaign for Our Next Century** will touch every part of the University and advance the institution's goals as outlined by President Julio Frenk in the Roadmap to Our New Century to secure its future in perpetuity.

This is an exciting time for the University community, as the Ever Brighter campaign will harness the U's invincible spirit and leverage it for the greater good, propelling the U into its next 100 years stronger, more vibrant, and more relevant than ever.

This new campaign is organized around seven powerful themes: Brighter Outcomes for Health and

Wellness, Brighter Science for Bigger Discoveries, Brighter Education for a Changing World, Brighter Lights for Leaders and Champions, Brighter Arts for More Vibrant Culture, Brighter Future for Our Planet, and Brighter Opportunities for All. The results of this interdisciplinary effort will have immeasurable impact across all University campuses, South Florida communities, nationally, and globally.



RIISING WITH THE SUN TO MEET NEW CHALLENGES

The School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) is key to the Ever Brighter commitment of elevating the impact of innovative research, health advances, and clinical care to improve lives. SONHS has organized its commitment to the Ever Brighter campaign around three pillars. Each pillar is poised to increase the school's capacity to prepare the next generation of frontline health leaders to address the challenges of today.

- **Promote Health Equity:** SONHS is well-positioned to lead interdisciplinary efforts that employ a comprehensive approach and consider a multitude of contributing factors.
- **Establish an Academic Center to Combat Human Trafficking:** SONHS is committed to eradicating human trafficking through the creation of the Human Trafficking Education and Prevention (HTEP) Center.
- **Optimize the Science and Practice of Person-Centered Precision Health:** Informed by years of clinical experience and interaction with patients, our nurse scientists are leading vital biobehavioral research to shape the future of holistic health care.

From nurses to physicians, pharmacists to epidemiologists, all health professionals have served as beacons of hope during the COVID-19 crisis. We rely on their knowledge, empathy, and experience in our most vulnerable moments. These are just the kind of world-changing health leaders—beaming with promise—that SONHS equips for excellence.

“Our use of simulation and experiential learning, coupled with instruction led by world-renowned researchers and expert faculty, has earned our school a global reputation for providing a first-class education,” says SONHS Dean and Professor Cindy L. Munro. “Our students do not just meet standards, they exceed expectations, routinely surpassing state and national testing scores.”

SONHS CAMPAIGN LUMINARIES

Oscar R. Morales, B.S. '75, M.D. '79, a highly respected obstetrician has joined with SONHS to guide this endeavor and serve as the School's volunteer campaign lead. He and his wife, Elise Morales, B.S.N. '77, M.S.N. '81, and their daughter Jessica Morales, B.S.N. '18, have strong ties to the School, as well as to the South Florida community, where they are engaged in improving health outcomes. “The Morales family has

generously supported the School and its mission for many years, including a gift to name the student lounge in the Simulation Hospital Advancing Research and Education (S.H.A.R.E.™),” says Dean Munro.

Additional leading lights in the school's campaign are the other members of the Dean's Advisory Committee: **Lisette Exposito, B.S.N. '86, RN, MHSA; Pamela J. Garrison, RN; Maria Lamas, A.B. 85, M.B.A. '13; Jayne Sylvester Malfitano; Arthur R. “Art” Miller, B.S. '78, M.B.A. '80; Elizabeth Smith, M.S.N. '09, D.N.P. '13; Alejandro F. “Alex” Vicencio, CFA, CFP, CIMA; David Zambrana, D.N.P. '09, Ph.D. '17, M.B.A., RN.**

For more information about Ever Brighter: The Campaign for Our Next Century and to learn how you can get involved, contact Paul Metcalf, development director, at 305-284-1785, and visit the campaign website at everbrighter.miami.edu.

Asthma Academy Helps Families Breathe Easier

New faculty initiative offers hope and help for family caregivers of children with chronic respiratory illness

By Yolanda Mancilla

Imagine you're the parent of a 5-year-old with severe asthma. Your child comes to you in the middle of the night, coughing and gasping for air, eyes wide and frightened. Imagine the panic you'd feel not knowing what to do in this life-or-death situation.

This chilling scene, vividly described by Professor of Clinical Cynthia Foronda, Ph.D., RN, CNE, CHSE, ANEF, FAAN, is experienced all too frequently by parents of asthmatic children. Again and again in her 20-year nursing career, Foronda encountered caregivers who were unprepared to help their children during an asthma attack.

"There's no reason for any child to die from an asthma attack at home because the family doesn't have information or resources to take action," says Foronda, who was recently named assistant dean for innovation, clinical research, and scholarship at the School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS). "We can and should close this critical gap in family caregiver education."

Determined to make a difference, Foronda conceived of the Asthma Academy to provide caregivers of 5-to-12-year-old asthmatic youngsters with tools to manage their children's condition, and act quickly and effectively in situations when every minute counts.

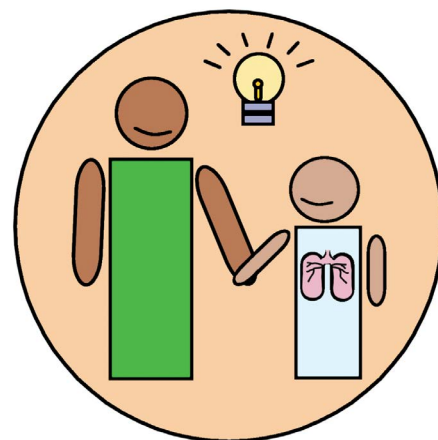


Support from the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation helped Foronda realize her vision. Early findings from an interdisciplinary pilot study launched this past spring show the Asthma Academy program to be significantly effective at improving knowledge and reducing depressive symptoms among caregivers.

To enroll family caregivers for the study, Foronda collaborated with Monica Cardenas, M.D., assistant professor of clinical pediatrics, and Alejandra Weisman, a clinical research coordinator, both from the Miller School of Medicine's Division of Pediatric Pulmonology. After assessing family needs, the team created a curriculum tailored for low-income and minority caregivers of children with asthma.

"Because vulnerable families can face challenges such as childcare and transportation that prevent them from participating, the Academy used telehealth technology to educate and support them in their homes," says Foronda.

The pilot study was a randomized controlled trial with 18 mothers, all of whom attended remotely conducted educational sessions. In addition to the educational sessions, half of the mothers also received telehealth video calls in English or Spanish from SONHS Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.) students. The students, who were supervised, underwent training on evidence-based best practices in telehealth, and conducted practice telehealth simulations with each other prior to conducting the visits.



Eye-Opening Experience

During the educational sessions, caregivers learned about how asthmatic children breathe, what can trigger asthma, how and when to use their child's medications, and the difference between everyday "controller" versus emergency "rescue" medications. They also gained skills to navigate the health care system.

"Some parents in the study had no knowledge of what medication their child was on, some were out of medication, and some confused the child's rescue and controller meds," says Foronda. "And no parent had an asthma action plan for what to do in a crisis."

Facilitators offered support and encouragement as well as information. "We validated the mothers when they were doing things correctly," says Foronda, "even if just to say, 'Yes, you're doing a great job, Mom!'"

Catalina Majilton, a D.N.P. student in the nurse anesthesia program, already knew the dangers of poorly managed asthma in children. As an emergency department and ICU nurse, she had seen parents tragically confused by the disease process, medications, and resources. "I witnessed kids who died," she says. "That's one of the things we can prevent."

Majilton says conducting telehealth visits for the launch of the Asthma

Academy was both rewarding and eye-opening. In some cases, she found the parent didn't realize her child's medications had expired. "Another parent told me, 'My son threw away some medications because he's been feeling fine lately,'" she says. In other instances, Majilton learned that no one in the home other than the mother knew what medications the child needed to take, or that the child's teacher was unaware the child had asthma.

Set to graduate this December, D.N.P. student Angela Herrera also provided telehealth visits and helped translate educational resources into Spanish. "I was shocked by the lack of education about asthma in the community," she admits. "The Asthma Academy is needed." The experience even inspired Herrera's scholarly project exploring how integrating telehealth education into the D.N.P. curriculum can give practitioners tools to educate more parents in the community.

Improving Caregiver Mental Health

Analysis of the study's quantitative data revealed that the virtual education the family caregivers received, with or without telehealth visits, significantly decreased the caregivers' depressive symptoms and improved their knowledge about asthma. Further, a review of the qualitative data demonstrated that the Academy was highly valued by students and caregivers alike.

"Our findings confirm that the Asthma Academy was a success," says Foronda. "Students identified and addressed gaps in parental knowledge, such as their understanding of medications and asthma triggers, and lack of an asthma action plan. Every parent indicated the Asthma Academy helped them learn about how to better care for their child."

From Asthma Academy to Asthma Center

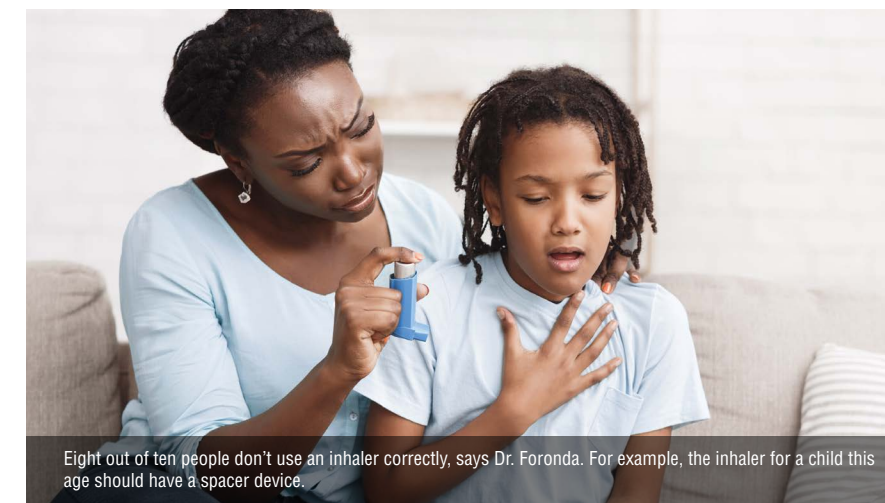
Foronda hopes the Asthma Academy model, which she is now working on disseminating, will serve as a national exemplar in the use of a novel family caregiver-based telehealth curriculum that demonstrates improved outcomes, especially in low-income families.

She and Cardenas are also partnering to establish an Asthma Center and apply for an "asthma friendly" designation for the University of Miami/Jackson Hospitals and outpatient clinics.

Additionally, Foronda is intent on integrating simulation and telehealth into student coursework. She was able to incorporate the online module about telehealth, developed by D.N.P. student Angela Herrera, into the School's "Technology in Health Care" course.

Foronda is grateful for the Macy Foundation's support. "It enabled me to develop a sustainable telehealth curriculum to better teach students and to assist vulnerable families of children with asthma in our community," she says. Foronda is more determined than ever to revolutionize how simulation and telehealth technology can empower family caregivers of asthmatic youngsters.

"Dr. Foronda is committed to improving asthma outcomes in South Florida," affirms Cardenas, "and she's using creative and collaborative methods to achieve this."



Welcome to **S.H.A.R.E.**TM

SIMULATION HOSPITAL ADVANCING RESEARCH & EDUCATION

An exciting branding campaign sheds light on a fresh outlook for simulation at SONHS

By Robin Shear



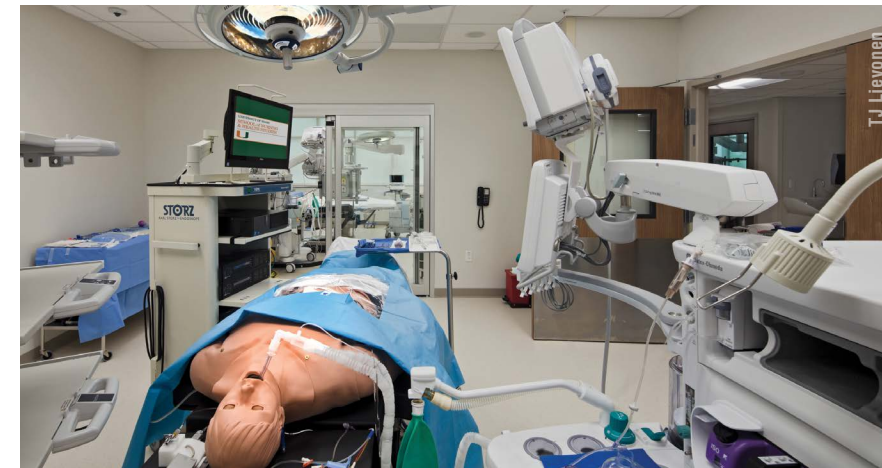
The School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) is proud to announce the simulation hospital's rebranding as the Simulation Hospital Advancing Research and Education (S.H.A.R.E.TM). Accompanying the new name is a new visual identity and social media presence for the School's five-story, 41,000-square-foot hub for health care and patient safety innovation, located on the Coral Gables campus. The update is timely amid an increased focus on safety for patients and hospital workers precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Branding Matters

The stylish S.H.A.R.E.TM acronym design, unveiled earlier this year, reflects the school's ongoing commitment to share with the international health care community evidence-based knowledge and other resources that will save lives and transform standards of care. The letter "A" at the center of the visual symbol, for example, was designed to suggest two roads converging into one path toward limitless discovery—a metaphor for how S.H.A.R.E.TM has brought together

scientists, health providers, students, and other stakeholders from around the world to work toward a safer, healthier future for all.

"I am so pleased we have a brand for our hospital that brings to light the substantial impact this incredible resource has on our school, students, and community," says Dean Cindy L. Munro. "We are at the forefront of this field, and our new tagline, 'Advancing Research and Education,' ties directly to our strategic plan and mission as the University nears its centennial."



While its brand is refreshed, the key facets that made S.H.A.R.E.TM unique from its conception remain intact. The heart of S.H.A.R.E.TM is still its stellar team of faculty, nurse specialists and educators, and simulation technologists. "S.H.A.R.E. immediately immerses users in a hospital setting," says Munro. "From the ambulance bay to the surgical suites to the home care apartment, S.H.A.R.E.TM is the ideal environment for inspiring interprofessional collaboration." Within this vibrant environment, the best mixed reality, virtual reality, and hands-on simulation technology is available to create customizable clinical, research, and academic experiences across the health care spectrum.

Leading The Way

Guiding this holistic endeavor to new heights are three noted early adapters of health care simulation who remain passionate about advancing the science to benefit patients, caregivers, and providers everywhere. **Donna McDermott**, Ph.D., RN, CHSE, associate dean for S.H.A.R.E.TM and associate professor of clinical at SONHS, joined the simulation team in 2019 and has since helped lead her staff through a highly successful accreditation review from the Society for Simulation in Healthcare (SSH), as well as an ongoing global pandemic and a full return to in-person instruction. "I love simulation because it gives students the opportunity to practice skills, decision-making, and clinical reasoning abilities in a safe environment," she says.

That safety factor proved invaluable throughout the pandemic, enabling students and community health professionals to continue meeting critical

learning objectives even as hospitals closed their doors to the outside world to contain COVID-19. "We did an amazing job supporting our students during the pandemic, especially when they weren't allowed at the clinical sites last summer," says McDermott, noting that the pandemic has inspired the simulation team to be more creative, flexible, and innovative than ever.

Jeffrey Groom, Ph.D., CRNA, APRN, FSSH, arrived at UM in 2017 to oversee the construction and initial launch of what was then known only as the simulation hospital. Today, as director of special projects for S.H.A.R.E.TM, Groom, an expert in simulation design, development, and assessment, is

responsible for expanding simulation-related opportunities and initiatives. These include simulation education courses for specific groups such as school nurses or medical residents, research and development, commercial and event-based use of the facility, and other business partnerships. A professor of clinical, Groom also manages continuing nursing education development. "I was fortunate to be at the start of a movement to integrate simulation as an instructional methodology in health care education," says Groom, an inaugural founding member and Fellow of SSH.

Ruth Everett-Thomas, Ph.D., RN, CHSE, brings decades of health care simulation experience to her new role as assistant dean for simulation programs at S.H.A.R.E.TM As assistant dean, Everett-Thomas is responsible for coordinating day-to-day operations, as well as contributing to the development of policies, procedures, and practices for S.H.A.R.E.TM An assistant professor of clinical at SONHS since 2016, she has worked closely with colleagues in designing simulation curricula.

Keep up with S.H.A.R.E.TM on Facebook and LinkedIn at @umiamishare. For more information, visit share.miami.edu or call 305-284-2709.

S.H.A.R.E.TM Lecture Series

An annual symposium has been hosted at S.H.A.R.E.TM since its opening, addressing the significance of simulation to health care, interprofessional collaboration, emergency preparedness, and other timely topics. This year featured two talks on the role of simulation. In honor of Patient Safety Awareness Week in March, Suzan Kardong-Edgren, Ph.D., RN, ANEF, CHSE, FSSH, FAAN, associate professor at MGH Institute of Health Professions and president of the International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL), spoke via Zoom on the topic of "Simulation for Patient Safety: Opportunities and Collaboration." Kardong-Edgren described a "growing movement to include patients when

developing simulations" and stressed the importance of employing "really good facilitators" for simulation scenarios. "If feedback is delivered in a way that is supportive, it makes all the difference in the world," she said. Kicking off the fall semester in September was John M. O'Donnell, Dr.PH., M.S.N., RN, CRNA, CHSE, FSSH, FAANA, associate director for the Winter Institute for Simulation Education and Research (WISER) at the University of Pittsburgh. Professor O'Donnell, who also chairs UPitt's Department of Nurse Anesthesia and directs its nurse anesthesia program, presented an insightful virtual talk titled "Simulation as Translational Science: Targeting Educational and Practice Gaps."

Honors



Guillermo “Willy” Prado, Ph.D., vice provost for faculty affairs, dean of the Graduate School, and professor, has been elected a member of the National Academy of Medicine. Election to the Academy is considered one of the highest honors in the fields of health and medicine. Prado was elected for his scholarship in prevention science, and for his effective youth- and

family-focused HIV and substance-use prevention interventions, which have been scaled throughout school systems and clinical settings in the U.S. and Latin America. Earlier this year, Prado was also recognized by his peers as one of 15 new inductees of the Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine of Florida for creating science-based youth prevention interventions and taking them to scale nationally and internationally.



Zhan Liang, Ph.D., M.S.N., RN, assistant professor, is the principal investigator (PI) for a \$50,000 grant from the Society of Critical Care Medicine for “Move to Music Video Intervention (V-Move) — A Music and Video Guided Exercise Intervention for ICU Survivors.” The overall objective of this preliminary randomized controlled trial is to

gather data to inform a larger clinical trial of the intervention. The premise is that a tailored, self-managed music- and video-guided exercise intervention will decrease physical inactivity and improve physical outcomes among ICU survivors. The grant is a continuation of her pilot study, “Music-Enhanced Physical Exercise for ICU Survivors,” which was supported by a 2018 ATS Foundation Nursing Research Award.



Carmen Presti, D.N.P. '12, ARNP, ACNP-BC, assistant professor of clinical, was accepted as a University of Miami Public Voices Fellow for The OpEd Project to be a voice for the underserved in prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease. Presti is an acute care nurse practitioner in Jackson Memorial Hospital's Cardiothoracic/Surgical Intensive Care Unit.



Mary McKay, B.S.N. '88, D.N.P. '09, APRN, CNE, associate professor of clinical and Wallace Gilroy Endowed Chair, was inducted as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing during the Academy's 2021 Hybrid Health Policy Conference in October. Academy fellowship is one of the highest recognitions bestowed in the nursing profession. McKay's FAAN

nomination highlights her contributions to nursing education and patient safety as exemplified by the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization nurse educator program she led development of in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. The Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society recognized the impact of the program's findings with its Excellence in Educational Research Award.



Régine Placide-Reaves, Ph.D., M.S.N.-Ed., M.P.H., RN, lecturer, was named to the inaugural fellows class of the Golisano Institute for Developmental Disability Nursing (GIDDN) at St. John Fisher College for 2021-22. The 12-month program develops nursing thought leaders who support and promote the health and well-being of individuals with intellectual

and developmental disabilities (IDD). Placide-Reaves is a long-time advocate and champion for children with special health care needs whose aim is to work toward policy changes based on the research findings of her doctoral dissertation, “The Lived Experience of Parents of Children with Special Healthcare Needs on Public and Private Insurance: A Phenomenological Study.”



Nicholas Metheny, Ph.D., M.P.H., RN, assistant professor, is the PI for a Center for Latino Health Research Opportunities (CLaRO) pilot study, “Developing an intervention to reduce intimate partner violence in Latinx male couples: a syndemic approach,” which is supported by a \$75,250 National Institutes of Health grant.

Promotions



Ruth Everett-Thomas, Ph.D., RN, CHSE, assistant professor of clinical, was named assistant dean for Simulation Programs at the Simulation Hospital Advancing Research and Education (S.H.A.R.E.™). In her new role, Everett-Thomas is responsible for coordinating day-to-day operational aspects as well as contributing to

the development of policies, procedures, and practices for S.H.A.R.E.™. A Certified Health Care Simulation Educator, she works closely with faculty in designing simulation curricula for entry-to-practice baccalaureate nurses, including scenario design, assessment and evaluation. She also has a strong background working in a major hospital-based simulation center to develop simulation interventions incorporating Team-STEPPS® strategies to promote patient safety and improved patient outcomes. Everett-Thomas's research interest and doctoral dissertation focused on improving Code Blue and Rapid Response team performance in clinical and acute care settings.



Cynthia Foronda, Ph.D., RN, CNE, ANEF, FAAN, professor of clinical, was named assistant dean for Innovation, Clinical Research, and Scholarship at SONHS. In this newly created role, she will provide vision and strategic direction toward growth of clinical research. Additionally, she will mentor faculty members to advance scholarship and promote

career development. Foronda specializes in virtual simulation, technology, cultural humility, and family caregiving. An expert in curriculum development and evaluation of educational interventions, she is focused on encouraging breakthroughs through use of innovation, diverse teaching methods, and interdisciplinary collaborations. Her work in virtual simulation has resulted in several international awards, and her research has provided some of the first evidence that virtual simulation is an effective pedagogy for nursing education. She is a member of the XR Research Summit for the Society for Simulation in Healthcare and the Standards for Quality Improvement Reporting Excellence for Simulation (SQUIRE-SIM) Consensus Workgroup.

Affiliated Faculty News



Felicia Marie Knaul, Ph.D., M.A., was recognized as an Honorary Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing (Academy) in October. At the University of Miami, Knaul is a professor at the Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine, director of the Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas, and a full member of the Cancer Control Program at the

Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center. She has a secondary appointment at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, where she collaborates with faculty on the Lancet Commission on Gender-based Violence and Maltreatment of Young People and other projects. The Academy presented Knaul's honorary distinction for “extraordinary and sustained contributions to promote nursing and advance health care,” in particular her efforts to reduce inequities and improve palliative care for vulnerable groups through the use of innovative research methods and her strong commitment to social justice and social development.



David Zambrana, D.N.P. '09, Ph.D. '17, M.B.A., RN, a lecturer in the SONHS D.N.P. program, was promoted from Jackson Health System's executive vice president of hospital operations to executive vice president and chief operating officer for Jackson Health System, overseeing all inpatient clinical operations across Jackson Health System. Zambrana is devoted

to team-based health care and transformative leadership. For the past year, he has worked with teams at all of Jackson's hospitals to keep pace with the pandemic, from therapeutics and negative pressure environments to in-house testing operations and vaccination outreach. At one point Jackson was delivering up to 4,000 vaccines daily across three sites. Starting out as a bedside nurse in the health system he now helps run, Zambrana earned his D.N.P. and Ph.D. degrees from SONHS. “I'm a nurse by training,” he says, “and very proud of that.”

Selected Faculty Publications

Fall 2021

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Shining Light in the Shadows of Mental Health

By Maggie Van Dyke

Triple 'Cane Deborah “Debbie” Salani, B.S.N. '86, M.S.N. '89, D.N.P. '12, is an associate professor of clinical devoted to educating nurses about mental health. One issue she is passionate about teaching is suicide prevention. Salani is one of just 33 American Psychiatric Nurses Association (APNA) nationally trained facilitators providing competency-based education for suicide prevention. As the director of the School of Nursing and Health Studies' post-master's certificate program in psychiatric-mental health nursing, Salani uses her training to ensure that every future psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) learns to identify and support patients at risk for suicide.



heard of this drug, so I researched it with the intent of educating other nurses.”

Similarly, Salani's eyes were opened to the global epidemic of human trafficking after meeting and counseling survivors in South Florida. She and School of Nursing and Health Studies colleague Beatriz Valdes, B.S.N. '99, recently obtained a University of Miami Citizens Board grant to support their efforts to educate other nurses on the often-overlooked red flags associated with human trafficking. “We have a golden opportunity to help these people when they come to the hospital or doctor's office, but most of the time we health professionals don't recognize the signs,” says Salani.

To date, she and Valdes have trained over 200 nurse practitioners in the Simulation Hospital Advancing Research and Education (S.H.A.R.E.™) at SONHS. The grant funds assisted in providing standardized patients to portray labor, sex, and servitude trafficking survivors, who often present for treatment at health care facilities. “Our dream is to develop a standardized screening tool that can help clinicians identify human trafficking victims, then assist in training hospitals to educate staff on using the tool,” says Salani.

Working with vulnerable populations, including children, adolescents, and older adults experiencing mental illness, has long been Salani's calling. After obtaining a bachelor's degree in psychology in Pennsylvania, she came to Miami and completed the B.S.N. program at SONHS with the goal of becoming a psychiatric nurse. However, during her pediatric rotation, Salani fell in love with caring for critically ill children. For the next 30 years, she did just that. As a pediatric nurse practitioner/clinical nurse specialist at Nicklaus Children's Hospital (then known as Miami Children's Hospital), Salani held several leadership roles, including the director of Emergency Department and Ambulatory Services and director of the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit/Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO) and Hemodialysis Unit.

Becoming a PMHNP in 2015 officially enabled Salani to blend her shared passion for pediatric and psychiatric nursing. In addition to being on faculty at SONHS, she sees young patients with mental health disorders in her private practice. “I love making a difference,” she says. “I enjoy caring for vulnerable individuals and being an advocate for them.”

2000s

Annette Requena, B.S.N. '04, is co-general manager of Vitas Healthcare in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, overseeing all aspects of end-of-life care for 22,000 patients and families and leading over 12,000 Vitas employees. She gave the opening remarks for this year's SONHS Alumnus of Distinction Award honoring **Cliff Morrison, M.S.N. '79**, sponsored by Vitas Healthcare (see page 35).

Emily Stauffer Rocha, B.S.N. '08, M.S.N. '13, earned her M.B.A. in 2020 and in January 2021 began a position as senior nurse policy advisor in the Office of the Medical Director, Medicaid and CHIP Services, Texas Health and Human Services Commission. Prior to this, she served in nursing leadership roles, most recently as the director of education at a children's hospital in South Florida.

2010s

Natalia Villegas Rodriguez, Ph.D. '12, associate professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing was inducted into the American Academy of Nursing's 2021 class of Fellows.

Madeline Fernandez, B.S.N. '13, Ph.D. '18, is an assistant professor at East Carolina University College of Nursing.

Ariel Smith, B.S.N. '16, Ph.D. '19, is an assistant professor (tenure track) at the University of Illinois Chicago, following two years as a postdoctoral research associate there.

Mikalya (Farr) Taylor, B.S.P.H. '16, has a master's in public health from Emory. She works as a public health communications specialist in Atlanta and recently started her own company as a health and wellness copywriter and web design service provider for online brands.

Nareka Trewick, B.S.P.H. '16, is an M.D. candidate at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, Class of 2023.

Hawwi Edao, B.S.P.H. '17, J.D. '20, recently passed the Florida bar exam and joined the Miami office of Foley & Lardner LLP, as an associate and litigation lawyer and member of the firm's Business Litigation & Dispute Resolution Practice.

Taylor Hughes, B.S.P.H. '17, graduated from Duke University School of Medicine.

Carlos A. Larrauri, M.S.N. '17, spent his summer as a student attorney for the University of Michigan Pediatric Advocacy Clinic with support from a Goodwin 1L Diversity Fellowship. He attends the University of Michigan Law School and is concurrently pursuing his master's degree in public administration at the Harvard Kennedy School as a Zuckerman Fellow.

Erika M. Redding, B.S.P.H. '17, is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Gillings School of Global Public Health. Her recent publications include “Examining the Effect of Pedestrian Crashes on Vulnerable Populations in North Carolina” (North Carolina Medical Journal) and “Personal Internalization of a Confederate Monument Removal Event Associated with Increased Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Among University Students” (Journal of Health Disparities and Research Practice).

Dario Vanegas, B.S.P.H. '17, received a full scholarship to attend medical school at the University of Vermont in Burlington.

Mayowa Olujohungbe, B.S.P.H. '18/A.B. '18, a J.D. candidate at Columbia Law School, was a summer associate in Washington, D.C., for Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP.

Destiny James, B.S.P.H. '19, who was featured in the “God's Plan” video receiving a \$50,000 scholarship from Drake, recently earned her master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Gillings School of Global Public Health.

Kristin Levoy, Ph.D. '19, is a National Research Service Award Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the NewCourtland Center for Transitions and Health at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, sponsored by the National Institute of Nursing Research (T32NR009365-12). Her research focuses on how preparation for the end of life across chronic illness trajectories impacts patient transitions to end-of-life care and caregiver transitions to bereavement.

2020s

Nina Wojtowicz, B.S.P.H. '20, M.P.H. '21, recently graduated from the 4+1 M.P.H. program and is starting a physician assistant degree program.

Cristobal Padilla Fortunatti, Ph.D. '21, successfully defended his dissertation, “Effect of Perceived Social Support on the Relationship Between Psychological Distress and Family Satisfaction Among Family Members of Intensive Care Unit Patients.”

Myrthle Nichola Henry, Ph.D. '21, school nurse at Lyford Cay International School in the Bahamas and adjunct faculty at the University of The Bahamas, successfully defended her dissertation “Relationship between Individual and Family Level Variables and Discrepancies in Reports of Psychiatric Symptomatology among Substance Abusing Hispanic Adolescents Ages 14-18.”

Sadandaula Rose Muheriwa, Ph.D. '21, successfully defended her dissertation, “Correlates and Predictors of the Development of Sexual Behaviors of Young Adolescent Girls in the Rural Southern Region of Malawi.” She is a postdoctoral associate at the University of Rochester School of Nursing, where she works with fellow 'Cane nurse **Natalie Leblanc, Ph.D. '16**, assistant professor and Harriet J. Kitzman Endowed Fellow in Health Disparities, examining factors contributing to HIV health disparities faced by Black women and other susceptible populations.

Brianna Nixon, B.S.N. '21, is a registered nurse on a renal transplant/IMCU unit at Memorial Regional Hospital.

Nicole Perez, B.S.N. '21, started August 31 as a neuroscience intensive care nurse at Duke University Hospital.

Sharon Shlakman, B.S.N. '21, passed her NCLEX-RN and started as an acute care registered nurse at New York University Langone Health. “I cannot wait to provide compassionate and quality care to all of my patients and help heal the world,” she writes.

Please email updates with your name, UM degree(s), and graduation year(s) to sonhs@miami.edu. Tag your LinkedIn updates to University of Miami-School of Nursing and Health Studies.

On behalf of the UM SONHS Alumni Association, I'd like to greet our alumni and extend a warm welcome to our new students—we wish you success in your studies at UM. I am also inviting you to join our Alumni Board if you would like to give back to our community.

Please contact me at your convenience at bfray2@jhs-miami.org or via text messages on WhatsApp or regular text at 305-586-6753. I look forward to hearing from you because new blood is always energizing.

Go 'Canes!

Beverly Fray, B.S.N. '03, M.S.N. '06, Ph.D., APRN, CNS-BC
 SONHS Alumni Association President



Reflections of a New Nurse

When **Kemika Lundy, B.S.N. '20**, graduated last May, the School of Nursing and Health Studies held its Spring Awards Ceremony virtually for the first time. Notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic, Lundy's mother, a licensed practical nurse, cried tears of joy because the Facebook Live event allowed her to participate in a ceremony she would otherwise have missed. That's because for almost a decade, Lundy's parents were unable to travel from their native Haiti to the United States—first because of their immigration status and then the pandemic. Finally, this July, Kemika and her mother were able to reunite at her alma mater. "Mom finally got to bring me to college," wrote Lundy of the woman who had inspired her to become a nurse. While Lundy calls her experience at SONHS "unforgettable" and her professors "amazing," she is ready for her new chapter as a registered nurse in the pediatric intensive care unit at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, where she started in July. "My biggest advice to new grads is be patient. View every



opportunity as a stepping stone, and stop and smell the roses at each turn along your journey," she says. "As a new grad starting my job on the post-operative medical-surgical unit, I quickly realized why it was not my first choice. However, I would not remove that experience of my

journey because it better prepared me for my PICU position now. Plus, I met some awesome individuals. Your journey and your path is yours. Work hard, and you will see the fruits of your labor in no time. You got this!"

2021 Alumnus of Distinction: Cliff Morrison, M.S.N. '79

By Yolanda Mancilla

The School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) community gathered virtually on March 25 for the 2021 Alumnus of Distinction Ceremony, held annually to recognize SONHS graduates distinguished as leaders in the health professions. This year's award honored Cliff Morrison, M.S.N. '79, for his pioneering contributions to the care of people with HIV/AIDS. The event was sponsored by long-time SONHS supporter and end-of-life-care provider VITAS Healthcare.

When Morrison began working at San Francisco General Hospital in 1980, he found himself at a crossroads that would change the course of his life and career forever. "Timing is everything—you find yourself in just that space and in that particular time," he said. "I was already hearing about the strange illness in San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles."

Then the first cases began arriving at San Francisco General. "At first it was just a few, then more, then I was asked to coordinate the care of patients scattered around the hospital in different units," said Morrison. "I was given the responsibility because no one had any answers."

He quickly realized the need for a designated area to develop expertise and a model of care for the patients. "The caseload was increasing dramatically, and we were overwhelmed," he recalled. "I had never seen anything like this."

In his new role as clinical AIDS coordinator, and guided by a hospice-based model of care and a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach, Morrison led his team to design "Ward 5B," the first specialized inpatient AIDS care unit in the world. In doing so, he asked his patients a crucial question: If we could do anything, what would you want to see? "We learned



more from our patients than from anybody else," he said. "The patients taught us."

Ward 5B received international recognition and its model adopted worldwide as the standard of care for persons with HIV/AIDS. In 2018, Johnson & Johnson commissioned the film "5B" to tell the extraordinary story of Morrison, his dedicated team of nurses and other caregivers, and the courageous patients who taught them so much. The film won four awards at the 2019 Cannes International Film Festival.

Morrison's contributions are uniquely relevant today, with the hard-earned wisdom gained during HIV's early years benefiting us as we confront COVID-19. "So much of the foundation we're building for COVID-19 came from what we did 40 years ago with HIV," Morrison said. As with AIDS, he explained, COVID-19 has generated widespread fears, misinformation, and social conflict. The challenge is to meet the historical moment—and learn from it.

"There's always going to be an opportunity, a crisis, when we have to think deep: What are my limits? How far will I go?" said Morrison, advising providers to "be

patient, keep your heart open, and try to care for each other." That's advice he said he would give his younger self as well. "Be more understanding—and a lot more forgiving."

"This country has been so divided over the last few years," he continued. "I'm hoping this pandemic will help bring us back together."

Morrison's leadership roles have included director of medical nursing at San Francisco General, project director of the California AIDS Education and Training Program, clinical faculty at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), deputy director of UCSF's Robert Wood Johnson Foundation AIDS Health Services Program, clinical professor and assistant dean of nursing at the University of San Francisco, and program director of the National HIV AIDS Conference. He has held multiple board memberships related to HIV/AIDS and his work has been recognized by the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, among many other entities. In 2020 Morrison received the Pioneering Spirit Award from the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses.

Doreen Penn Gustave Is Unstoppable

By Yolanda Mancilla



In the intensive accelerated nursing program (A.B.S.N.) at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, many things come at you at once. But a fast-paced, jam-packed schedule is no problem for Doreen Penn Gustave, B.S.P.H. '21. This past May, Gustave graduated from the School's public health program on a Friday, and without missing a beat, started the School's A.B.S.N. program the following Monday.

"Public health opened my eyes to maternal and child health nursing, and my passion for serving women and children has only grown stronger," she says.

Born in Miami to Haitian immigrant parents, Gustave watched her mom work hard to provide for the family and took on many responsibilities at an early age. Soon she became interested in health care. Growing up near Overtown and Opa-Locka, "I saw the need in those communities," she says. These experiences inspired her "to work harder for my family, my city, and my people—to make sure we receive the equal care we deserve."

With boundless energy and an ever-present smile, Gustave has been making a name for herself at the U since beginning her undergraduate studies in 2017. A first-generation college student, Gustave became an ambassador for the President's 100, leading prospective

"I'm excited by what's ahead."

students on campus tours. She served as an Orientation Fellow and Leader, and was accepted into Leadership UMiami, traveling to Washington, D.C., to meet with elected officials. By her senior year, she was the first Black president of the President's 100 and a representative of UM's Black Leadership Caucus.

Earlier this year, Gustave co-founded the Beyond the Horizons mentoring program, an initiative of the Office of Multicultural Affairs for first-year and transfer minority students, and she shows no signs of slowing down. These days, Gustave is focused on meeting the rigorous demands of the year-long

A.B.S.N. program. After completing her first clinical at the University of Miami Hospital and Clinics | UHealth Tower, she moved on to rotations in medical/surgical at Baptist Hospital and in pediatrics and maternal health at Jackson Memorial Hospital.

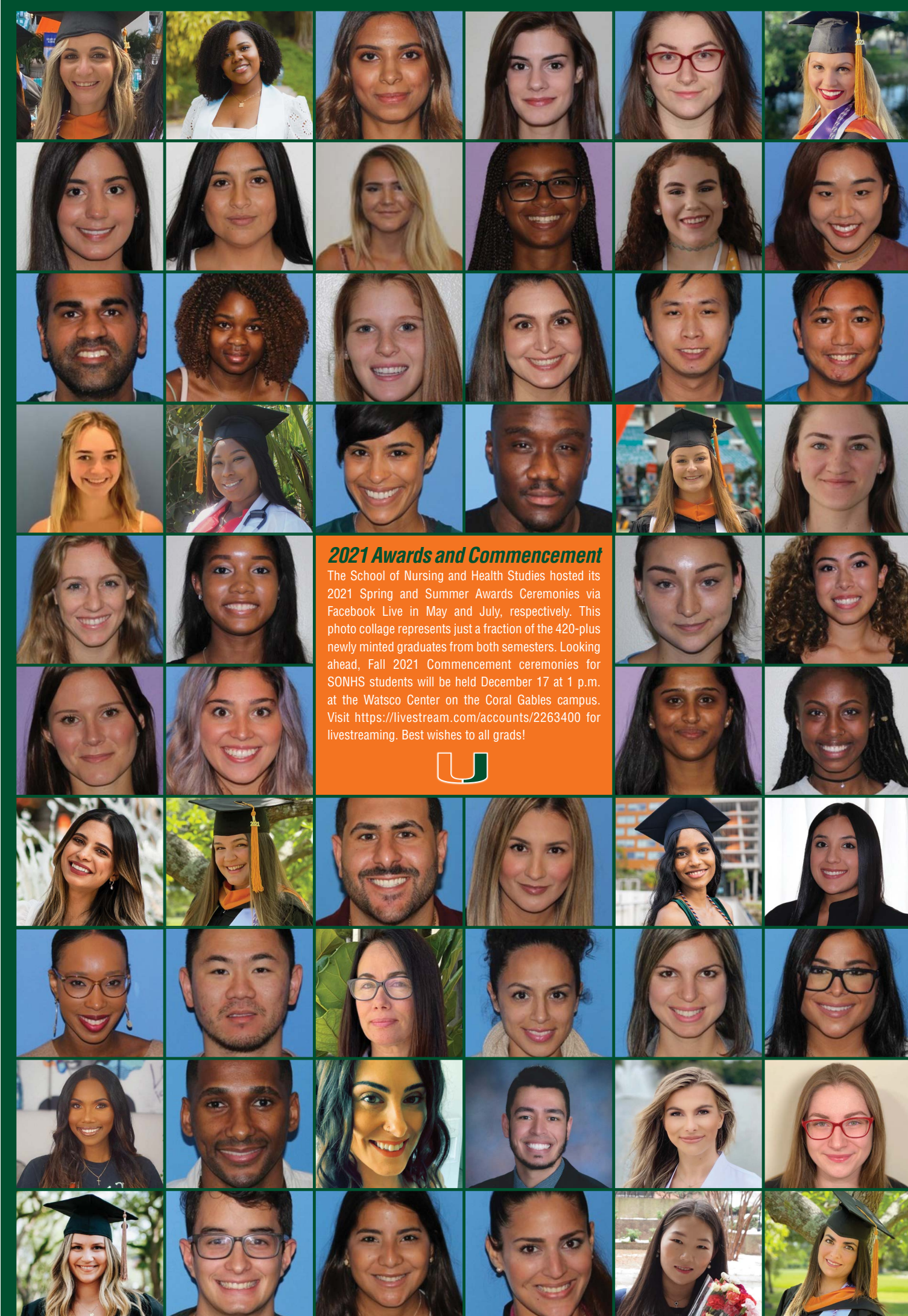
After months of pandemic shutdowns and remote/hybrid learning, she's grateful to have in-person classes and clinicals. "We can go to the hospital, interact with patients, and learn from the nurses," she says. "It's super-difficult, but I'm excited by what's ahead."

Gustave's graduation from the A.B.S.N. program in May 2022 will mark the beginning of what promises to be her extraordinary trajectory as a nurse. She plans to enter a nurse residency program, then to earn master's degrees in both nursing and public health. She envisions leading mission trips to Haiti and around the world, providing prenatal care, vaccines, and health education to pregnant women and children.

"I'll use knowledge gained in both disciplines to make a difference," she says, "and my leadership experience will help me work as a team member with others who have different backgrounds or ways of thinking."

But for now, pursuing nursing and public health at a historical moment, when both professions are being challenged like never before, Gustave is acutely aware of the relevance and urgency of her work.

"It makes me more passionate to get out into the field, to help our country and our people move forward, and care for our patients," she says. "I'm committed to learn and do more in my clinicals, so when I'm out on my own, I'll be ready."



2021 Awards and Commencement

The School of Nursing and Health Studies hosted its 2021 Spring and Summer Awards Ceremonies via Facebook Live in May and July, respectively. This photo collage represents just a fraction of the 420-plus newly minted graduates from both semesters. Looking ahead, Fall 2021 Commencement ceremonies for SONHS students will be held December 17 at 1 p.m. at the Watson Center on the Coral Gables campus. Visit <https://livestream.com/accounts/2263400> for livestreaming. Best wishes to all grads!





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