

# heartbeat

Spring 2013

University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies



A **DECADE** OF  
LEADERSHIP



D.N.P. IN NURSE ANESTHESIA • • • Ph.D.s TACKLE DISPARITIES • • • SIMULATION HOSPITAL



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Our cutting-edge simulation laboratories—among the most sophisticated in the United States—enable our students to work on the most lifelike human simulators available before they ever touch a real patient. Our “patients” act just like the real ones—they can talk or make noises, have babies or have heart attacks, exhibit vital signs, and perform most human bodily functions.

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The mission of the School of Nursing and Health Studies is to educate students and support faculty committed to excellence in nursing and health science. Through research, education, and practice, the school will create and disseminate health knowledge and prepare culturally competent leaders to provide safe service to our community, the nation, and the world.

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## An Extraordinary Ride

**Welcome to the fall 2013 issue** of *Heartbeat* magazine. A decade ago, I was welcomed into the University of Miami family. Reflecting on the changes, achievements, and challenges encountered by the school and the nursing field over the last ten years, it has been an extraordinary ride.

In the inaugural issue of this magazine (fall 2004), I asked for the support of our faculty, staff, alumni, students, and University leadership in advancing a vision for academics, research, community, and global partnerships. That same year, I spoke with great excitement of our rising enrollment of 431 students. Today we have more than 850 students in our new home—the School of Nursing and Health Studies. Our graduates' NCLEX-RN passing rate is 98.78 percent, the highest in our school's history and of all South Florida nursing schools. Our master's programs have a 100 percent certification rate. We have just become the only nursing school in Florida, and one of only 16 in the nation, to offer the B.S.N.-D.N.P. Nurse Anesthesia track degree.

These and other outstanding achievements, some of which you will read about in this issue, are possible only through the remarkable dedication of our faculty members and our clinical and community partners. Scholarship support at all levels has been key to our recruitment of a diverse and talented student body. Although I wear many hats, my primary mission as dean is to prepare our students for careers as scientists, health care providers, and educators of tomorrow. Being surrounded by an exceptional supporting cast greatly facilitates this mission.

While we should take a moment to savor our accomplishments, there is much left to address. There is still a national and international shortage of nursing faculty. Miami-Dade County still ranks near the bottom on both statewide and national standings in terms of percentage of uninsured residents, ratio of primary health care providers to people, preventable hospital stays, and access to prevention screenings. Health care reform is the new law of the land, while an entire population of baby boomers, including nurses, is aging and retiring. We must keep pace with these changes by contributing highly prepared health care professionals to the workforce.

I am more excited than ever to be at the School of Nursing and Health Studies. Our vision for the future includes the first-of-its kind Simulation Hospital on our campus, part of *Momentum 2: The Breakthrough Campaign for the University of Miami*. This achievement will require your continued support. Together we can make it happen!

It is thus with renewed vigor that I thank you for ten years of inspiration, persistence, collaboration, and courage. Stay tuned for the next issue of *Heartbeat*, which will take us back to where it all began as we celebrate the school's 65th anniversary. Your stories are our stories, so send your best photos and anecdotes from your time on campus to Rosa Lamazares-Romero at [rmlromero@miami.edu](mailto:rmlromero@miami.edu) or 5030 Brunson Drive, Coral Gables, FL, 33146.

**Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano**  
Dr.P.H., R.N., F.A.A.N.  
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“We must keep pace with these changes by contributing highly prepared health care professionals to the workforce.”





## West Meets East: Graduate Students Gain Transcultural Experience in Taiwan

Since 2005 the School of Nursing and Health Studies' international exchange program has given students the opportunity to earn elective credits and gain a global perspective on nursing care that they can apply in their future careers. The students enrolled in Transcultural Healthcare (NUR 697) last summer, however, are already putting their worldly enlightenment into practice because for the first time, the school offered this "mini-mester abroad" opportunity to graduate students, all of whom are already nursing professionals.

Three master's level and two Doctor of Nursing Practice students, along with Todd Ambrosia, associate dean for the master's programs and assistant professor of clinical, traveled in July 2012 to Taipei, Taiwan in the Republic of China as part of the three-credit course on integrative health care modalities and their incorporation into advanced nursing practice. The visit was organized as part of the faculty and student exchange agreement between the SONHS and National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences. Under the same agreement, ten students came to Miami for a similar cultural immersion in summer of 2012.

The group's two-week program was packed with a variety of learning activities and focused on traditional Chinese and Eastern health care practices. Students learned about acupuncture, aromatherapy, herbal medicines, and the art of cupping, which is a suction treatment used to remove toxins from the body. During

the aromatherapy segment, students worked side by side in the lab with Professor Tsz-Ya Hung, a professional aromatherapist who taught them how to extract essential substances from plants such as scallions and roses to make healing aroma oils.

The UM students were most impressed by how prevention and wellness are at the center of this society's health care system. "The health care system is organized around maintaining health rather than regaining health from illness," explains Cynthia Alceus, M.S.N. '12.

The biggest surprise for Alceus and her fellow students was the existence of entire facilities dedicated to keeping people well, such as Chang-Gun Memorial Hospital and a whole department in Cheng-Hsin General Hospital. During their tours of these facilities, the students learned that it is routine for Taiwanese patients to check into these hospitals for a day or longer even though they are not sick, purely to receive comprehensive

physical, psychological, social, and even spiritual care for health promotion.

"If you check into the hospital there and you are a devout Buddhist vegetarian, those beliefs will be incorporated into your treatment regimen," says Ambrosia, an expert in integrative medicine and holistic nursing.

While cultural competence and prevention are components of these students' education here at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, according to Ambrosia, health care in the United States has not yet fully integrated these concepts.

"This is valuable knowledge for our future health care leaders to acquire," Ambrosia says. "It has implications for health care reform and saving dollars on the front, prevention-oriented end of health care. Once a patient is sick, treatment is more expensive."

The students' cultural experience in Taiwan also included shopping excursions to Shilin Night Market and Tik-Hwa Street. The best mementos however, are the valuable health care techniques these nurses can now integrate into their practice. This two-way street of knowledge sharing and application is exactly the point of international nursing exchange programs.

## NCIN Scholarships Increase Diversity in the Workforce

Before she entered the Accelerated B.S.N. Program at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, Hakimah Bankston worked for a company in Baltimore that provided free tutoring for low-income youth. While canvassing city streets to enroll children in her programs, she observed an environment marred by drugs, alcohol, hunger, and abandonment.

from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the field of nursing.

"We are proud that with the help of RWJF NCIN scholarships, our program is replenishing the pipeline with capable, culturally competent nurses from a variety of ethnic, socioeconomic, and racial backgrounds," says Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano, dean of the School of Nursing and Health Studies. "Years

ago I was an RWJF Clinical Nurse Scholar myself, an opportunity that changed my life."

The backbone of the RWJF NCIN scholarship program is a threefold approach that combines a pre-entry immersion

program, a one-on-one mentoring program, and a leadership development series. The method seems to be working, as 90 percent of the students who received funding in the first three years of the program have indicated a desire to advance their education to the master's and doctoral levels.

Bankston plans to earn a master's degree in nursing with the goal of becoming a nurse practitioner for low-income families. She envisions revitalizing abandoned community centers in impoverished neighborhoods into multipurpose facilities that provide health care services and education as well as artistic and athletic outlets to residents, especially children.

"I want to provide an environment that combines my love of education and medicine to open minds and change lives," Bankston says. "Obtaining a B.S. in nursing is a critical step toward making those dreams a reality."

Visit [www.newcareersinnursing.org](http://www.newcareersinnursing.org) to learn more about the NCIN program.



"I was hurt that anyone had to live that way, but I was also inspired," writes Bankston, B.S.N. '12, who recounted her experiences in an essay that won the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation New Careers in Nursing (RWJF NCIN) February 2012 Essay Contest. "This community had no life, no heartbeat, and no one who cared! Inside me there is a little girl who remembers a life filled with struggle."

Bankston, the first in her family of seven to attend college, joined fellow RWJF NCIN scholars Calvin Dudley, Monica Garcia, and Mathew Roy in graduating from the School of Nursing and Health Studies in December 2012.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing launched the NCIN Scholarship Program in 2008 to help alleviate the nursing shortage and increase diversity in the nursing profession. To date, the program has provided a total of \$500,000 in scholarships to 50 "second-career" UM nursing students

## March of Dimes Awards Celebrate Nursing Excellence

The School of Nursing and Health Studies once again exhibited a strong presence at the March of Dimes Nurse of the Year celebration on November 30, 2012 in Miami. Faculty members Rosina Cianelli, Martin Schiavenato, and Carol Tuttas were selected as March of Dimes Nurse of the Year in the categories of Clinical and Academic Education, Critical Care/Surgical Services, and Student Nurse/Graduate, respectively.

This annual event celebrates the contributions of nurses who have demonstrated extraordinary patient care, compassion, and service. It also honors nurses' critical role in advancing the March of Dimes mission as health care providers, educators, researchers, fundraisers, volunteers, and advisors. We applaud our faculty members' well-deserved selection for these important awards!



Rosina Cianelli



Martin Schiavenato



Carol Tuttas





## Nursing Students Lead Community Health Fairs

**“Who has a piercing somewhere on their body? Who is interested in getting one in the future? Who wants a tattoo?”**

Hands shot up as Lauren Jarboe, B.S.N. '12, and other School of Nursing and Health Studies students asked a group of adolescents several discussion-provoking questions at Ponce de Leon Middle School in Coral Gables. The UM nursing students' visit to the middle school last November, which included a health fair and extensive education program, was coordinated through the Thelma Gibson Health Initiative, an afterschool intervention program funded in collaboration with The Children's Trust. Programs like these are an important part of the SONHS curriculum because they give nursing students hands-on experience while enriching South Florida residents with valuable information and services.



## Delivering a Healthy Dose of Community Care

Just days after Zoila Matienza, a University of Miami UNICCO contract worker, was discharged from the hospital for diabetes complications, School of Nursing and Health Studies students hosted a health fair where she could receive glucose monitoring and guidance on managing her illness.

The fair, held at her workplace during working hours, was much more convenient than going to a clinic. It is just one example of how UM nursing students are delivering wellness education and lifesaving health screenings to various populations, including underserved groups, in the University's own backyard.

“Our students are enthusiastic about applying their growing health care skills to help real people needing real primary care,” says Rosemary Hall, associate professor of clinical.

Hall and several other faculty members teach Population Focused Nursing (NUR440), a course in which its students host health fairs such as the one Matienza attended and others that benefit a diverse array of patients, ranging from UM employees to the elderly to adolescents at nearby Ponce de Leon Middle School. The result is a mutually beneficial relationship between SONHS students and the people of South Florida.

*Health fair participant Zoila Matienza receives healthy eating tips.*



Laughter erupted when Jarboe shared her personal disastrous middle school experience of trying to pierce her own belly button, an example of why it's important to have procedures like piercings and tattoos conducted with parental permission and in a professional establishment. Another topic of the day was the health benefits of regular exercise, including the importance of staying hydrated when playing sports in the hot Florida sun. But perhaps the most critical lesson they learned is there's nothing scary about a health care professional. The students seemed to understand that these friendly nursing students were there not to stop them from getting tattoos or piercings but to show them the right way to go about it, and protect themselves in the process. Some of the students also saw the UM guests as role models for a future career in health care.

Earlier in the month, students from the same middle school attended a mini health fair and



teaching session at the SONHS

hosted by Accelerated B.S.N. students. Nurse Specialist Susana Barroso gave the young visitors a guided tour of the International Academy for Clinical Simulation and Research. They marveled at the notion that every UM nursing student is able to work with such lifelike human simulators that are capable of exhibiting multitudes of symptoms.

After having their weight and BMI (body mass index) checked by UM nursing students, the young visitors heard a talk from then-student Rick Cressman, B.S.N. '12, on “What is Nursing?” They also received “A Close Look at the Nursing Profession,” an age-appropriate take-home brochure that Cressman and fellow student Kelsey Umbdenstock, B.S.N. '12, created. The adolescents were surprised to learn that in addition to hospitals and medical offices, nurses may practice in unexpected locations such as prisons, sporting arenas, camps, and travel destinations.

“Hopefully we shattered some stereotypes with this activity,” Umbdenstock says.

## A Day in the Life Opens High Schoolers' Minds to Nursing

It was a day that broadened their horizons. On November 9, students from a health science class at Miami Carol City Senior High School took part in “A Day in the Life of a Nurse” at the School of Nursing and Health Studies. Sponsored by Miami Children's Hospital in collaboration with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, this experience was designed to provide local teenagers with new insights into the exciting field of nursing.

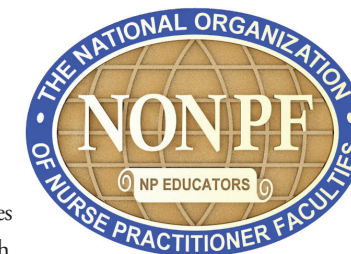
The day began with a question-and-answer session covering the history and evolution of the nursing profession. Nurse Specialist Susana Barroso and Doctor of Nursing Practice student Arnold Stocker facilitated the session and shared personal anecdotes about what it means to be a nurse in today's world. National health care reform, an aging baby boomer population, and new developments in science and technology have prompted a sweeping transformation of the nursing field. The students were thrilled to get a realistic look at where a nursing education may take them.

“Our goal was to make students aware that nursing is not just at the bedside,” Barroso says. “Nurses are lawyers, teachers, scientists, policymakers, and members of the military. Also, nurses are not only girls. The students, especially the boys, seemed interested in the fact that 21 percent of our student body is male.”

“I learned a lot about the different career options that I never knew existed for nurses; my mind is even more open to a nursing career than before I came here,” said Miami Carol City student Raneka Davis. Her classmate Ammie Araujo echoed the sentiment: “I am now more motivated than ever to pursue nursing as a career.”

Following a guided tour that introduced the youngsters to the lifelike simulators in the International Academy for Clinical Simulation and Research, the visit concluded with a complimentary lunch and gift bag for each student containing SONHS T-shirts, wristbands, and other items to commemorate such an enriching experience for both the high schoolers and the SONHS faculty.

## SONHS Designated Honor Roll School



**The National Organization** of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF) again recognized the School of Nursing and Health Studies for its outstanding programs and faculty by designating it a 2012/2013 Honor Roll School. The NONPF is the only organization specifically devoted to promoting quality nurse practitioner education at the national and international levels.

“To be selected for the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties Wall of Honor for two consecutive years is a testament to the outstanding efforts of our exceptional faculty in designing and maintaining a world-class learning environment that consistently turns out highly qualified health care professionals,” says Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano. “We also recognize the hard work of our students, who are at the center of our programs.”

The School of Nursing and Health Studies offers master's degree nurse practitioner programs in the areas of Family Practice, Adult-Gerontology Primary Care, and Adult-Gerontology Acute Care. The faculty are renowned academic and clinical leaders in their respective specialties.



## First M.D./D.N.P. Ethics Forum Builds Inter-Professional Relationships

If a child's treatment for a life-threatening illness is damaging his quality of life, should treatment continue? If the parents of conjoined twins decide to let them die rather than approve a surgical separation that would save one twin's life, how should the health care professionals proceed? These are just two examples of countless challenging ethical dilemmas that can arise in health care practice.

At the School of Nursing and Health Studies, the goal is not to give students the answers to these kinds of dilemmas but rather the tools to make informed decisions. One of the most important tools is inter-profession communication, which is why Mary Hooshmand, assistant professor of clinical nursing, invited faculty from the Miller School of Medicine and UM Bioethics Programs to speak to doctoral students in the NUR 655 (Health Care Management, Economics, Financing and Ethics) course. This step evolved into a first-ever joint ethics session for medical and nursing doctoral students, held on the Coral Gables campus in November.

"Bringing medical students and nursing students together for cooperative learning experiences can enhance mutual respect and collaboration, improve communications and decision making, and potentially reduce moral distress," says Robin N. Fiore, associate professor of medicine at the Miller School and director of special ethics initiatives for UM's Bioethics Programs.

Fiore, who facilitated the joint session, presented the case of the conjoined twins and a second end-of-life decision scenario to three medical students and 40 D.N.P. students. The participants then divided into three groups to discuss how they would handle the cases.

**"Bringing medical students and nursing students together for cooperative learning experiences can enhance mutual respect and collaboration."**

"The nursing profession must develop leaders who will practice as full partners with physicians and other health care professionals in order to promote the highest quality patient care and excellent outcomes," says Deborah Salani, B.S.N. '86, M.S.N. '89, D.N.P. '12, assistant professor of clinical and one of the D.N.P. students who participated in the joint session.

As the southeast regional nursing director for Children's Medical Services (CMS), Hooshmand had long talked about the need to forge collaborative relationships between nurses and physicians with CMS Regional Medical Director Jeffrey Brosco, professor of clinical pediatrics at the Miller School and



*Nursing and medical students debate a clinical dilemma.*

chair of the Pediatric Bioethics Committee at Jackson Memorial Hospital. So after joining the nursing school faculty this summer, Hooshmand took a cue from the Institute of Medicine committee report on The Future of Nursing and invited Brosco and Kenneth W. Goodman, founder and director of the UM Bioethics Program, to meet with her NUR 655 students.

"One of the key messages of the IOM report was inter-professional collaboration, how we can no longer work in silos," Hooshmand says. "We need to begin the framework for that dialogue at the student level."

Goodman gave the D.N.P. students an overall perspective of medical ethics, and Brosco explained what he calls the "five C's of medical ethics"—consent, confidentiality, competence, caring/compassion, and conflicts of interest. Brosco has since added a sixth "C," collaboration, which was a valuable suggestion from the D.N.P. students.

"This is critical," Brosco says. "There has been a long history of misunderstanding between doctors and nurses on too many occasions. If we can get our doctors and nurses talking to each other from the beginning, we think health care will work a lot better."

## SONHS Welcomes New Associate Dean for Health Studies

The University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies is pleased to announce the appointment of Martin M. Zdanowicz as associate dean for health studies, responsible for overseeing the school's health studies programs, including public health. He brings with him 20 years of administrative experience in hospital and academic settings and nearly 30 years of teaching experience.

"I look forward to playing a role in the training of our next generation of health care providers at such a prestigious university," says Zdanowicz, who most recently served as chair of pharmaceutical sciences for the Savannah and Columbia campuses of the South University School of Pharmacy in Georgia.

Zdanowicz also is former chair of pharmaceutical sciences at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences. He holds a Ph.D. in Pharma-

ceutical Sciences - Pharmacology from St. John's University School of Pharmacy and Allied Health in Jamaica, New York, and master's degrees in both higher and postsecondary education and in biology/physiology. His research interests include pharmacogenomics, cardiovascular pharmacology, curriculum development, and active learning techniques. He is a member of several professional societies and has published numerous peer-reviewed articles and two textbooks.



Zdanowicz joins the school at an important juncture, given the growing national reputation for excellence of its health studies curricula, including the new Bachelor of Science in Public Health degree.

"I welcome Martin to the new leadership position and look forward to working with him to assure the continued growth of our long-standing health studies programs," says Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano.

## Sharing Education Expertise with Guyana Nursing Faculty

The shortage of nursing faculty is well documented in most countries worldwide, including the United States, but the extreme scarcity of educators is most acutely felt in the developing world. During their visit to Guyana in January 2013, Professor and Vice Dean Doris Ugarriza, M.S.N. '81, and Assistant Professor of Clinical Mary McKay, D.N.P. '09, learned that there are only seven faculty members for every 500 students in each one of the Guyana Ministry of Health's four public nursing schools.

To help ease this burden, Ugarriza and McKay facilitated a three-day

workshop for faculty and administrators from the country's public nursing schools on how to conduct clinical instruction with an emphasis on patient safety. They distributed a Clinical Instruction Education Manual to all workshop participants, to the Ministry of Health leadership, and to all participating schools of nursing and hospitals.

The visit to this Caribbean nation, which Ugarriza says was filled with a palpable "dedication and spirit" among the health care educators they met, was made possible through a Memorandum of Understanding between the UM School

of Nursing and Health Studies, the Ministry of Health of Guyana, and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). To extend its assistance, the school and PAHO are collaborating on a series of virtual education sessions centered on older adult nursing care instruction, a need the Guyanese nursing educators identified as critical.

These activities in Guyana are in keeping with the School of Nursing and Health Studies' designation as a PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Human Resources Development and Patient Safety.





## Leadership Revitalizes UM Chapter of the National Student Nurses Association

When Michelle Diaz left a successful project management career to pursue her passion for nursing at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, she brought her leadership savvy and ambition with her. Amid the rigors of being an Accelerated B.S.N. student, Diaz and her fellow executive board members reinvigorated the National Student Nurses Association's University of Miami chapter (UM-NSNA).

Creating service-learning opportunities and developing leadership skills are primary goals of the NSNA, which encourages students to work cooperatively with peers, faculty, students in other disciplines, community service organizations, and the public. NSNA activities also are designed to highlight the multidimensional aspects of nursing.

"It's important that nursing students' education not be conducted in a silo," Diaz, B.S.N. '12, says of her decision to join UM-NSNA, "and that students realize nursing is not static. Rather, nursing is what you make of it."

The revitalized UM chapter has thrived under its new leaders. In fall 2012 alone, the UM-NSNA organized expert lectures on a variety of health care topics, raised funds through bake sales and NSNA T-shirt sales, went door to door during the Florida Breast Health Initiative neighborhood outreach campaign, and marched in scrubs in the Alumni Weekend and Homecoming parade to show their nursing pride. They also held a nonperishable food drive, organized a Thanksgiving Meal Bag drive for the Camillus House homeless shelter, and rallied teams of students and faculty to serve meals on Thanksgiving at both Camillus House and First United Methodist Church of Coral Gables/South Florida Urban Ministries.

"I want to emphasize that UM-NSNA is an organization of students, for students, by students," Diaz says. "We welcome all students from freshmen through D.N.P. to join us and enrich us, and we very much like to engage the faculty, staff, and alumni of our prestigious school to actively participate in the development of student nurses—the future of nursing leadership."



UM-NSNA fall 2012 president, Michelle Diaz, celebrates her B.S.N. degree.



UM-NSNA spring 2013 co-presidents Tiffany Ojea and Maria Francis

"This is one of the most energetic groups on campus," says Assistant Professor Kenya Snowden, M.S.N. '10, D.N.P. '12, a faculty advisor of UM-NSNA, along with Assistant Professor Sara Lawson. "They are constantly seeking innovative ideas and new funding and working hard with our University and community partners to expand learning, service, fundraising, and socializing opportunities."

Before they graduated, Diaz and other UM-NSNA board members recruited colleagues to apply for the remaining positions, including spring 2013 co-presidents Maria Francis and Tiffany Ojea.

"NSNA membership is beneficial to any student hoping to become an active part of the health care community," Francis says. "Although I'm graduating this year, I'm confident that our board is creating a great foundation for service events and networking opportunities in upcoming years."

### UM-NSNA SPRING 2013 BOARD

Maria Francis and Tiffany Ojea, Co-Presidents  
Rama Escolin, Vice President  
Vanessa Paz, Treasurer  
Natalie Padilla, Secretary  
Caroline Swets, Public Liaison Officer  
Krysten Sargent and Gretter Arnold, Junior Representatives  
Robyn Wojeck, Historian  
Jessica Perez, ABSN Representative

## Gonzalez-Guarda Named to National Advisory Council

Rosa Maria Gonzalez-Guarda, assistant professor and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Nurse Faculty Scholar, has been appointed to the National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice (NACNEP) of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Her appointment became effective in November 2012.

The NACNEP advises the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services

and the U.S. Congress on policy issues related to Title VIII programs administered by the HRSA Bureau of Health Professions Division of Nursing, including nurse workforce supply, education, and practice improvement. Gonzalez-Guarda also serves on the Florida Action Coalition on the Future of Nursing as co-chair of the Education Action Team, charged with increasing the level of education and training of nurses in Florida.



"This is yet another role in which this productive faculty member's unique experiences and insights will advance the profession," says Victoria Mitrani, A.B. '80, Ph.D. '86, associate dean for research and professor. "She is a wonderful representative of the School of Nursing and Health Studies."

## Lyrical Breakthrough Helps Veterans Heal

Like many nursing students, Caroline Swets, a senior in the traditional B.S.N. program at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, did not know what to expect going into her Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing (NUR 448) clinical experience.

"You think of people in ankle bracelets and behind bars," she says.

The course is a degree requirement, so Swets dutifully signed up to assist with the group therapy program for posttraumatic stress disorder-affected patients at the Miami Veterans Affairs Medical Center. She found the experience surprisingly profound from both a personal and professional perspective.

"You don't expect the strong bond that you see these war-traumatized Vietnam, Gulf, and Iraq War veterans develop with each other," Swets says. "They appreciate and are happy to see us. The benefit they get from us is equal to the benefit we get from them. The learning is mutual."

Swets recalls a particularly intense breakthrough during a music therapy session. The veterans had been assigned a "write your own lyrics" exercise, which helps them find an outlet for their emotions through song lyrics. The nursing students were invited to

participate in this exercise, so Swets wrote her own lyrics to the song "It's Going to Take Some Time This Time" by The Carpenters. What she wrote resonated so deeply with the group that the veterans asked her to repeat the song several times.

"It really made me take a step back and realize that by participating in an exercise and meeting the patients on their own ground, even a student like me can make a difference," Swets says.

This experience of helping to heal patients' hearts and minds as well as their bodies is one that will stay with this student throughout her nursing career.



## Thank You, Clinical Partners!

The School of Nursing and Health Studies celebrated its clinical and community partners at an annual appreciation dinner held at the school on January 30, 2013. In her welcoming remarks, Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano thanked the guests for their service as role models and educators to the students.

"Our extensive network of diverse clinical partners is considered one of the jewels of our program," she said. "On behalf of the school, the University, our students, and especially on behalf of the many patients who will one day benefit from what our students are learning from you, I want to thank you for your time and commitment to helping us educate the next generation of health care professionals."



# Taking It to the Next Level

By Maria Padron

**Faced with a severe** national shortage of nurse anesthetists, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in 2004 established a mechanism to fund new degree programs for this clinical specialty in regions where the deficit was

The School of Nursing and Health Studies offers the first anesthesia doctoral degree in Florida, one of only 16 accredited programs in the nation.

particularly severe—places like Miami-Dade County, Florida. The School of Nursing and Health Studies applied for and received one of these HRSA grants, the fertile seed from which a nurse anesthesia program would soon take root.

Rossana Bizzio was working as a nurse anesthetist at Jackson Memorial Hospital (JMH) in 2005 when she was asked to join the school part-time to help get the skeleton program off the ground. She is now director of what has evolved into one of the most sought-after specialized degree programs at the School of Nursing and Health Studies. But like most births, the nurse anesthesia program did not arrive completely smoothly or painlessly.



Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist Shane Haglum helps CRNA students Jessica Angel and Stacy Steinberg build their clinical skills using simulation.





ROBERT KLEMM

## Renowned for Rigor

By fall of 2007, the M.S.N. in Nursing Anesthesia program had more than quadrupled in size. The clinical practice sites had also multiplied exponentially, and in addition to JMH, the students had the opportunity to do their clinical rotations at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, the Miami Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and two locations in Broward County: Cleveland Clinic and Westside Regional Medical Center. Bizzio sees the expansion of the clinical practice sites as one of the program's most significant achievements and the biggest draw for potential students.

"The ability to rotate students through meaningful clinical experiences such as chronic pain management, transplantation, high-risk obstetrics, high-risk pediatrics, and trauma makes the program especially unique," Bizzio explains. "Our students are able to practice advanced skills in addition to the administration of anesthesia. Not many CRNAs in training have the opportunity to do that. It really makes us stand out."

The economic downturn of recent years also affected the number of students seeking nursing degrees, in many cases as second careers, especially in the nurse anesthesia specialty. Among the program's applicants of the past few years are mechanical engineers, CEOs of industry, Ph.D.s in other disciplines, attorneys, and even a few surgeons. As the School of Nursing and Health Studies' national reputation has continued to grow, so has the strength of its faculty, and this has, in turn, attracted an ever-higher caliber of students to the CRNA program. While the program is still largely focused on advanced clinical training, there is the opportunity to work with faculty on research projects.

*Rossana Bizzio has helped to lead the nurse anesthesia program since its inception.*

The chance to interact with Miami's different cultures is another big plus. At JMH alone, students are exposed to a number of unusual procedures, providing them with uncommonly rich clinical rotation experiences, from complicated transplantations to the most extreme cases treated at JMH's nationally renowned Ryder Trauma Center. These interactions lead to an extremely well developed anesthetic management skill set. Surveys of program graduates and their employers confirm that the School of Nursing and Health Studies produces CRNAs who go from novice to expert in a very short time frame.

"Our graduates can go anywhere in the nation and feel confident functioning as nurse anesthetists," Bizzio says. "Our didactic and clinical training gives them all the skills they need to be successful in any setting."

Dunia Lozano, M.S.N. '10, D.N.P. '12, who now works as a CRNA at University of Miami Hospital (UMH), agrees that the quality of the program's clinical education is unsurpassed.

"Working with a high acuity patient population on a daily basis not only afforded me ample experience as a student, it also provided me with the confidence that I needed to begin my career as an anesthesia provider," Lozano says. "The educators and clinical faculty do a great job of incorporating the didactic curriculum into the operating room setting. The pillars of critical thinking, independence, and safe patient care were constant staples of the curriculum. The training that I received at the University of Miami prepared me well above and beyond for my practice as a CRNA."

The program has also made a name for itself in terms of rigor. Says Bizzio, "As far as nurse anesthesia programs go, ours is a challenging one, and the students are aware of it. We are known as one of the most rigorous programs within what is already a very rigorous specialty. Employers know it as well, so a degree earned here is a very marketable commodity."

Samantha Rowley, M.S.N. '07, executive director/assistant vice president of perioperative services at UMH, graduated in the program's inaugural class. She confirms that the program is not for the faint of heart but says there's a reason why it's so tough. "When you graduate and are holding your CRNA license in your hand, that's when you realize the seriousness of the job you are doing and how critical and delicate it is, and that the faculty challenges you to prepare you for this," she says. "How challenging the program is only makes me prouder to be a graduate of it."

Today the school has graduated almost 100 nurse anesthetists, not counting the 60 students currently enrolled in what has turned out to be one of the most prestigious degree programs in the history of the School of Nursing and Health Studies. The program now boasts a total of 14 clinical practice sites.

The most recent accomplishment is the landmark opening of the B.S.N.-D.N.P. Nurse Anesthesia track, which will enroll its first cohort of students in January 2014. This is consistent with the requirement from the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists that all Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist programs begin changing their curriculum from a Master of Science in Nurse Anesthesia degree to a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree by the year 2025. The School of Nursing and Health Studies is one of the first institutions in the United States, and first in Florida, to answer that call.

Transitioning from master's- to doctoral-level preparation, the D.N.P. program will afford nurse anesthesia graduates the opportunity to engage in leadership, administrative, and health policy courses. This will increase the breadth and depth of their exposure to the health care environment, making them a stronger presence in the community as professional advanced-practice clinicians.

The expansion of the nurse anesthesia degree program also meshes well with the school's plans for a new Simulation Hospital that promises to transform 21st-century health care education. It is in the simulation lab, after all, that students are introduced to real-world scenarios through simulated life-and-death experiences in a controlled environment. The Simulation Hospital will provide increased opportunities for intensive education of nurse anesthetists in a variety of settings where they can develop their inter-professional teamwork and communication skills without presenting danger to real patients.

"We are preparing our graduates to interact with an increasingly complex interdisciplinary health care environment," says Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano. The B.S.N.-D.N.P. program is also in line with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Future of Nursing report's recommendation that nurses achieve higher levels of advanced education and that they be educated in new ways that better prepare them to meet the needs of the population."

Because patients in hospitals are generally acutely ill, they require health care providers with higher skill levels. In the new B.S.N.-D.N.P. program, existing clinical anesthesia courses will be revamped to the doctoral level to impart to our graduates the skills and knowledge required to be effective operating room practitioners as well as successful leaders in tomorrow's health care systems.



# Ph.D.s PAY IT **FORWARD**

By Maria Padron



**A PREGNANT IMMIGRANT** from the Dominican Republic in New York City wonders about her childbirth choices. A Cuban-American mother in Miami-Dade County, Florida, wants to reduce her chances of contracting an STI. An overweight Latina in Lansing, Michigan, seeks motivation to exercise. Apart from being minority women, what do these three individuals have in common?

The answer is that they all face the barriers to good health inherent in their racial or ethnic affiliation, neighborhood environment, or socioeconomic status. Inequities in health arising from factors like these are called health disparities. Fortunately, nursing scientists educated at the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies, now working in various locations across the country, are turning their scientific curiosity about health disparities into solutions for reducing the health gap between minority and majority populations.

To get a more detailed picture of the strides our alumni researchers are making in this area, *Heartbeat* spoke to three recent graduates of the School of Nursing and Health Studies Ph.D. program, which dates back to 1985. A snapshot of their current activities reveals the breadth and depth of their contributions to women's health and to the well-being of disparity populations across the nation.

**Alumni  
nurse scientists  
are using what  
they learned at UM  
to shape health  
care delivery  
nationwide**



## DESIGNING PICTURES OF HEALTH

Adriana Arcia, Ph.D. '11, enrolled in the B.S.N.-to-Ph.D. program in 2008 under a prestigious University of Miami fellowship, with a concentration in maternal/neonatal health. Her dissertation focused on a topic about which Arcia is passionate: women's childbirth choices. Now a Postdoctoral Research Fellow for Reducing Health Disparities through Informatics at Columbia University School of Nursing in New York, Arcia is developing a proposal to help women with low health literacy improve their comprehension to make informed decisions about childbirth.

At Columbia, Arcia is a team member on the Washington Heights/Inwood Informatics Infrastructure of Community-Centered Comparative Effectiveness Research (WICER) project, which provides access to a rich data set of health information obtained from participants in the primarily Hispanic neighborhoods of northern Manhattan. Arcia is eager to return analyzed data to participants on everything from individuals' exercise habits to their nutrition to their sleep patterns. She is also a member of WICER's Visualization Working Group, charged with creating a variety of infographics to give study participants, most with no medical background and many with language barriers, an easy-to-read pictorial image of their own health data. The goal is self-health management.

"You need to understand your own health data if you are going to act upon it," says Arcia, who works with a platform that allows respondents to view their health data on smartphones. "In this community not everyone has a computer in the home, but everyone has a smartphone."

Merging modern technology with research is second nature for Arcia. For her

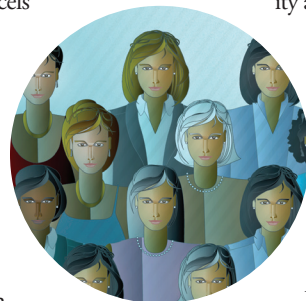
Ph.D. dissertation project at UM, she recruited all participants through Facebook and executed her dissertation study entirely online. She talks about the interdisciplinary nature of the WICER project, where she works in collaboration with physicians from Columbia's medical school, as well as psychologists, informaticians, and computer scientists. Arcia, herself a bilingual female from a Hispanic background, says that in addition to having honed her research skills, the SONHS prepared her to work with underrepresented populations.

"I think where the UM School of Nursing and Health Studies excels is in shedding light on health disparities science," Arcia says. "Although my dissertation study did not specifically target a disparity population, just being at the school, which is home to the Center of Excellence for Health Disparities Research: El Centro, made it part of my vocabulary as a nurse researcher. I took that experience with me and was able to understand the language of health disparities science when I arrived at Columbia."



## SUBSTANTIATING SUBGROUP DIFFERENCES

Amber Vermeesch, Ph.D. '11, is yet another nurse scientist utilizing the scientific knowledge gained at the SONHS to improve the lives of vulnerable populations. The focus of Vermeesch's dissertation was on predictors of and barriers to exercise in Latina women. She is now assistant professor of nursing at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan, where she is exploring physical inactivity and obesity in Latina



women, an issue much more complex than just saying Latinas need to exercise more. She is an investigator on a Michigan State University study that asks

whether exercise motivators vary for childbearing Latinas based on whether or not they are overweight.

Vermeesch is also involved in secondary analysis of data compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and



Prevention's annual National Health Interview Survey to determine which subgroups of Latinas are more and less likely to be physically active. She has already determined that women who are foreign born and prefer to do the interview in Spanish—in other words, those who are less acculturated—are also least likely to exercise. She has also identified certain Hispanic nationalities that are less physically active than others. Vermeesch stresses this is important because it recognizes cultural differences between subgroups of Latina women and how their particular country of origin influences their physical activity level, rather than just grouping all Latinas into one category.

"In East Lansing, Latinos comprise only 12.5 percent of the population and are much more homogenous than in Miami," Vermeesch notes. "During my time at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, because of the diverse demographics of the surrounding community, I experienced a heterogeneous Latino population. I learned from my mentors how different Latino nationalities' cultural idiosyncrasies affect their health issues in various ways. I would not be where I am without my experience at Miami."

In what seems to be a trend among the SONHS Ph.D. graduates, Vermeesch is also working at an interdisciplinary level and experimenting with modern technology to deliver health-promoting interventions to underrepresented populations. She is designing a research study with her Michigan State College of Communications Arts colleagues in the use of social media platforms to frame and deliver messages to individuals based on their particular motivational styles (intrinsic versus extrinsic). She is also working with the College of Engineering on a food-intake device that will measure calorie intake in much the same way pedometers now measure daily steps. Vermeesch

teaches in both the undergraduate and the master's program of the College of Nursing and serves on the Board of Directors of the Lansing Latino Health Alliance, which works to reduce health disparities and improve the health status of Latinos in the Greater Lansing area.

## TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE AT ITS BEST

Like Arcia, Natalia Villegas-Rodriguez, Ph.D. '12, learned to think like a scholar and acquired strong research skills in the Ph.D. program at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, where she is now assistant professor of clinical. Villegas-Rodriguez first visited UM as part of the international student exchange program. A nurse midwife from Chile with a master's degree in nursing administration and a keen interest in health care education and prevention among young Hispanic women, Villegas-Rodriguez found the faculty's research expertise in HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases a perfect fit for her goals.

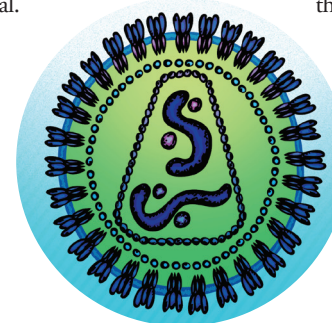
After being offered a faculty position at the school upon completion of her Ph.D., Villegas-Rodriguez decided to stay and continue learning from some of the country's leading health disparities scientists. She now teaches fundamentals of nursing practice and maternal health courses and is coordinator of SEPA III, an evidence-based program funded by the National Institutes of Health/National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities that reduces HIV/STIs and domestic violence among Hispanic women. What Villegas-Rodriguez finds most exciting is that she is teaching

Miami-Dade County Health Department staff to deliver the intervention directly to women already being seen by the agency.

"Learning to do this culturally specific intervention themselves is really making the health department staff see the value of research, and that it's not us, the academics, over here and them over there," Villegas-Rodriguez says. "It's about the populations we serve."

The study's findings are expected to contribute to the interdisciplinary knowledge base on the success of community-research institution partnerships that promote translational science.

In addition to her teaching and research activities, Villegas-Rodriguez is busy polishing and disseminating the results of her dissertation, in which she developed an entirely Internet-based HIV and STI prevention intervention for Chilean women in the form of video modules and blogs. She is interested in further researching the use of technology for STI and HIV prevention in disparity populations and hopes to eventually develop her own randomized clinical trial using the knowledge of methodology, scientific rigor, and top-tier research experience that she continues to acquire from her mentors at the School of Nursing and Health Studies.



Left: Nursing Ph.D. alumni Amber Vermeesch and Adriana Arcia are improving the lives of vulnerable populations through research in Michigan and in New York, respectively. Right: Ph.D. alumna Natalia Villegas-Rodriguez is continuing her health disparities research as a faculty member at the UM School of Nursing and Health Studies.





Architectural renderings bring to life the vision for the Simulation Hospital. Shown here, from top to bottom, are an operating room, an intensive care unit, and a skills resource center.

# BUILDING THE FUTURE

**WHEN IT COMES TO HEALTH CARE EDUCATION**, simulation saves lives. Unlike learning in an unforgiving clinical setting, simulation allows students to experience a concept or scenario multiple times until they master it. It makes them active rather than observational participants in patient care and prepares them to proceed with confidence when they begin clinical rotations.

The School of Nursing and Health Studies has been a destination center for simulation immersion since 2006, when it created its International Academy for Clinical Simulation and Research. The academy, where high-fidelity, computer-

driven simulators mimic detailed physiological symptoms and respond to student-led interventions, was the first large-scale simulation center in the country designed exclusively for nursing and health sciences education.

Now the school embarks on its greatest challenge yet—to build the nation's first education-based Simulation Hospital, an interactive learning environment that

**Plans move forward for a first-of-its-kind Simulation Hospital**

captures the true-to-life flow of activities. The hospital will be a five-story, 39,000-square-foot facility covering the full life cycle—from birth to end-of-life care and from inpatient to home health care experiences. It will allow students to develop superior clinical expertise while working across disciplines to increase high-level communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and leadership.

The Simulation Hospital will be a resource for the University—as well as for the local, national, and global health care community—to conduct evidence-based research that can be applied immediately to the real world. Faculty and students will use the Simulation Hospital as a platform to conduct risk-management research on various factors in patient safety, such as response times and near-miss scenarios. It will also be used as a beta testing site for new health care products. The hospital will help the school collaborate with partners to introduce the most advanced health care technology and to effect policy on safety procedures and quality patient care.

The School of Nursing and Health Studies Simulation Hospital is a key priority of *Momentum2: The Breakthrough Campaign for the University of Miami*, as well as a critical part of the school's commitment to solving the national health care crisis resulting from a rapidly aging population of both patients and nurses.

## HELP US MAKE HISTORY

Join the elite University of Miami Founders Society, which recognizes gifts of \$1 million and above, in building the future of health care education by establishing the Simulation Hospital. The School of Nursing and Health Studies will match the first \$5 million raised through the Founders Society.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SIMULATION HOSPITAL

- Auditorium, 300 Seats
- Bedside Skills Lab
- Debriefing Rooms
- Emergency Department Unit
- Exam Clinic Unit
- Founders Lobby
- Home Health Care
- Intensive Care Unit
- Labor and Delivery Unit
- Medical Surgical Unit
- Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
- Operating Room Suites
- Palliative/Hospice Care Unit
- Pediatric Unit
- Skills Resource Center
- Tele-Health Unit





# From Imagination to Transformation

By Yolanda Mancilla

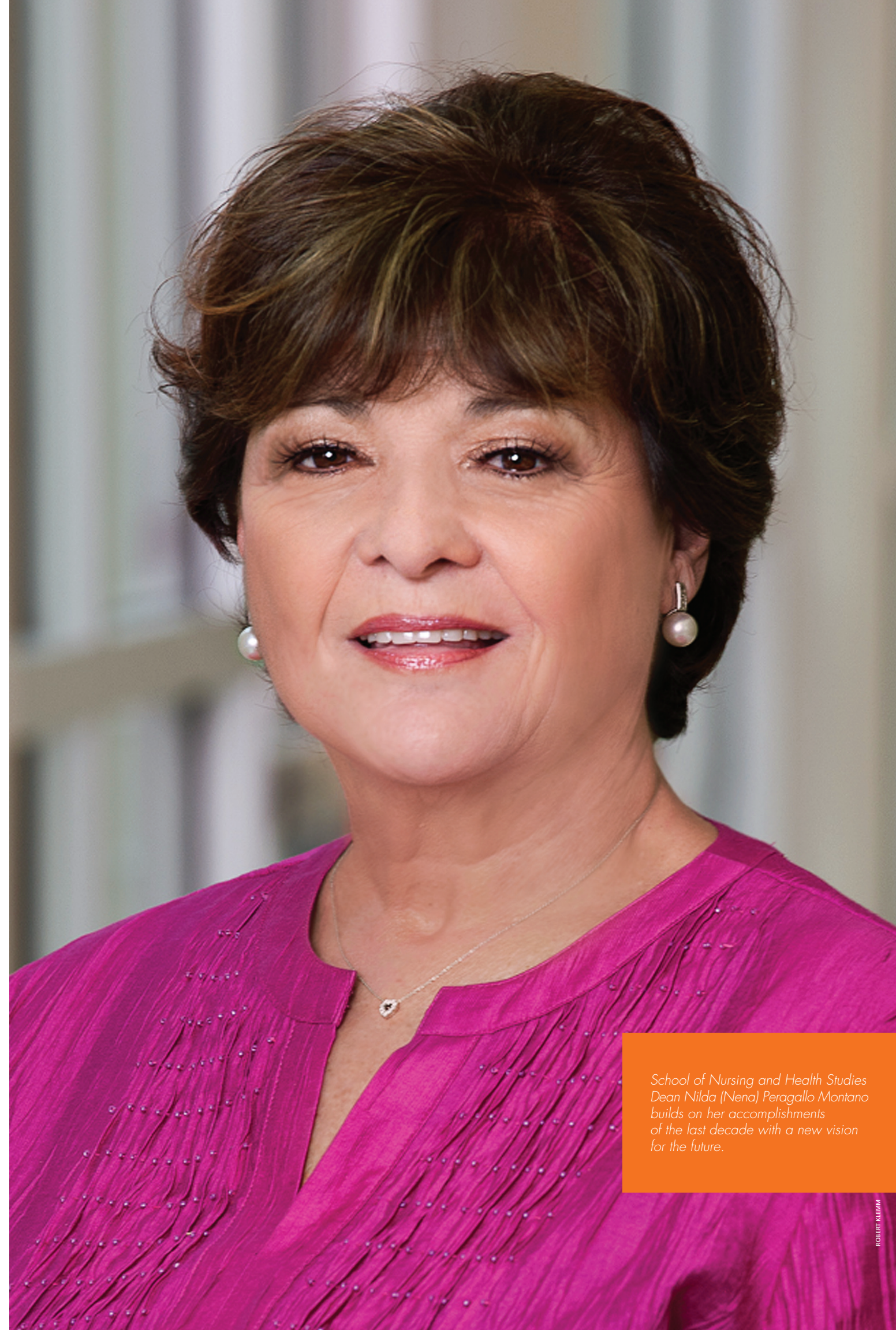
**The Americana Ballroom** of the Loews Miami Beach Hotel is filled to capacity. On the stage waiting to address an audience of 1,000 from more than 40 countries are University of Miami President Donna E. Shalala, National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities Director John Ruffin, officials of the Pan American Health Organization, and other

Ten years ago Dean Nilda Peragallo Montano took the helm of a fledgling school with a big heart. Infused with her visionary leadership over the past decade, the school now stands as a worldwide model for nursing education and research in the 21st century.

dignitaries. Suddenly a door bursts open, and the festive beat of the University of Miami Band of the Hour led by Sebastian the Ibis brings the cheering crowd to its feet.

When the band stops playing, Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano, dean of the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies, is at the podium welcoming the health care leaders, scientists, educators, and students who have gathered for the XIII Pan American Nursing Research Colloquium. The University of Miami was selected as the first U.S. host of the prestigious event. Neither President Shalala, nor Ruffin, nor anyone who knows Peragallo Montano is surprised by the hugely successful turnout. As the dean enters her tenth year at the helm of the school, it is her signature energy, perseverance, and visionary dedication to nursing education and nursing science that have transformed it into a world-class health care education program.

School of Nursing and Health Studies Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano builds on her accomplishments of the last decade with a new vision for the future.





## Growing from the Ground Up

When Peragallo Montano arrived at the University of Miami in 2003, she embraced a school of nursing that she knew held great potential despite the many challenges it faced. The school was housed in an obsolete building on the edge of campus. It was one of the smallest schools at the University, with low student enrollment. It was not well known within the University or the local South Florida community, let alone nationally or internationally. There was no research portfolio.

Peragallo Montano had come to UM from a “top-ten” nursing school. She knew what was possible, and she knew how to dream of the seemingly impossible. She was also highly aware of the acute national and international shortage of nurses and other health care professionals, as well as the need for faculty to prepare the next generation of professionals to meet the challenges of health care in the 21st century, a need that still exists today.

Propelled by this sense of urgency, Peragallo Montano lost no time in identifying priorities for the school. The first was to implement an existing plan for a new, more centrally located facility that

would engender a sense of place among students and faculty. Also on the list: support the school’s dedicated team of faculty while recruiting dynamic new faculty with research portfolios; engage alumni and students in mentoring and community-building efforts; attract minority and other underrepresented students to the nursing profession; capitalize on Miami’s multicultural setting and population; and launch global research initiatives as well as a robust international student and faculty exchange program. Steadily, the dream came to life.

Today, Peragallo Montano’s vision has taken shape in the form of a bustling school that exudes the dynamism of its leader. Follow the dean through a typical day, and if you can keep up with the exhausting pace, you’ll find her wearing many hats—leader, researcher, mentor to students and faculty, community activist, and humanitarian. At any given moment she might be leading a tour of international nursing educators who traveled here to learn about the school’s International Academy for Clinical Simulation and Research, discussing the findings of a clinical study with a team of researchers, mentoring a doctoral nursing student who is working on his dissertation, or speaking about HIV prevention at a meeting of community-

based health providers. And by the end of the day, when you are ready for some well-earned rest, Peragallo Montano might be rushing to catch a flight to Brazil or Australia or Taiwan to set up clinical and research exchange programs so that UM nursing students can gain firsthand knowledge about global health care issues.

At the core of so much activity is a woman deeply committed to ensuring that a college education is available to any student who is willing to work hard.

“I was the first one in my family and the only one of my five siblings to attend college,” Peragallo Montano reveals. “And my children are college educated. I am an unflagging advocate for education.”

Over the years, the dean has worked hard to impart the value of an advanced education to her many mentees. “What stands out most is her superior intelligence and her kind consideration at all times, in all places,” notes Versie Johnson-Mallard, a researcher and primary care faculty member at the University of South Florida College of Nursing who was mentored by Peragallo Montano as part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Nurse Faculty Scholars Program at UM. “She preaches that success comes with persistence and thinking big. Nena is a true mentor and a life coach.”

Johis Ortega, B.S.N. ’02, M.S.N. ’06, Ph.D. ’10, assistant professor of clinical, director of international programs, and director of clinical placement at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, recalls first meeting Peragallo Montano in 2003. “Even though she had just come on board and had a million things going on,” he says, “she took the time, and still does, to mentor and encourage me to pursue my advanced education. She made me see my own potential, as a member of an underrepresented group, for a career in nursing education and research. She embodies what it is to be a leader who does her work based on service, and that comes from her heart.”

Indeed, only someone with a deeply caring nature and the ability to multitask could have propelled the school to its achievements of the past decade. Through the generosity of nurse, educator, and philanthropist M. Christine Schwartz, a major investment had established a fund to build a new home for the school. One of the first things Peragallo Montano did was to work closely with Schwartz, now a UM trustee, and with President Shalala to raise the rest of the funding—an additional \$12 million—for what was to become the state-of-the-art M. Christine Schwartz Center for Nursing and Health Studies, which broke ground in 2004.

*In October 2012 Dean Peragallo Montano was tapped into Iron Arrow, the highest honor at the University of Miami. At the tapping ceremony were Joanna Dauer, UM Trustee Edward A. Dauer, B.S.E.E. ’72, M.D. ’75, M.S.B.E. ’01, and UM Board of Trustees Chairman Leonard Abess.*

Inaugurated in 2006, the 53,000-square-foot building is now home to more than 800 students, faculty, and administrative staff who together form a community of scholarship and service. The delightful bustle represents more than a 250 percent growth in student population over the past ten years. In addition to fully equipped classrooms, laboratories, offices, and meeting spaces, the building houses the International Academy for Clinical Simulation and Research, the first simulation center in the country designed exclusively for nursing and health studies education.

“Creating a school atmosphere allowed faculty members to maximize their teaching strategies and work with students in promoting the highest level of health care,” says Doris Ugarriza, M.S.N. ’81, professor and vice dean, who has been with the school since 1994. “The new school building has made all the difference in attracting qualified students and faculty to the SONHS.”

## Building a Global Research Enterprise

While the Schwartz Center was under construction, Peragallo Montano was committed to bringing the school’s curriculum and degree programs in line with the changing health care needs of our nation. Together with the school’s curriculum committee and faculty, the dean began implementing a broader, more expansive vision for nursing and health care education. In February 2005 the school changed its name to the School of Nursing and Health Studies, reflecting the integration of an expanding health sciences program. In fall 2010 a Public Health Minor was introduced, and in fall 2012 the school admitted its first students into a new, fully accredited Bachelor of Science in Public Health degree program. The revamped curriculum recognizes today’s need to prepare students for a health care



2003

- Dean Peragallo Montano arrives at the UM School of Nursing

2005

- SONHS introduces Nurse Anesthesia and Acute Care master’s degree programs, as well as global studies programs in Chile and Haiti

2004

- The M. Christine Schwartz Center for Nursing and Health Studies breaks ground
- The school adds a Bachelor of Science in Health Studies degree program and changes its name to the School of Nursing and Health Studies

2007

- SONHS launches the Center of Excellence for Health Disparities Research: El Centro with a \$7 million-plus grant award from NIH/NIMHD, the first P60 center grant funded to a nursing school
- SONHS expands its global studies program to Mexico, adding Spain in 2010, Taiwan and the Republic of China in 2011, and Australia, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic in 2012.

2006

- SONHS moves into the M. Christine Schwartz Center for Nursing and Health Studies

2008

- SONHS introduces an Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program
- SONHS is designated a PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Human Resources Development and Patient Safety



environment where the roles of nurses and other health care professionals are increasingly interconnected.

“What really works best for the patient and family is that we work as a team,” says Peragallo Montano. “Students need to learn that early on.”

“In today’s increasingly interdisciplinary and globalized health care environment, this integration of health

Residency Program to help new graduates transition into rapidly changing and exacting professional roles in the real world. And she led the nursing programs to ever-more-demanding academic and clinical practice standards that resulted in record-high passing rates in the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN).

## Together with the school’s curriculum committee and faculty, the dean began implementing a broader, more expansive vision for nursing and health care education.

studies into our school’s curriculum was timely and cutting edge,” says faculty member Diego Deleon. “It really placed us at the forefront of nursing schools working to educate a new cadre of transformational leaders within health care systems.”

To help address the critical need for more nurses, Peragallo Montano worked with the faculty to institute an Accelerated B.S.N. program that allows students who have a bachelor’s degree in another field to obtain their nursing degree in 12 months. She implemented a yearlong Nurse

More than 98 percent of graduates in 2012 passed the NCLEX-RN on their first try.

Though it was a challenge to recruit faculty with strong research portfolios to join an up-and-coming school, Peragallo Montano was undeterred. She emphasizes that the support of the UM leadership, especially of President Shalala, was integral to this success. Today the school ranks among the top 25 in the nation and second in Florida among schools of nursing for National

Institutes of Health funding. And two major initiatives have put the school on the international map—its designation as a Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization Collaborating Centre and its NIH/NIMHD-funded Center of Excellence for Health Disparities Research: El Centro.

“I am very proud of the extraordinary gains our School of Nursing and Health Studies has made under Dean Peragallo Montano’s leadership,” President Shalala says. “Her commitment to improving the health of our nation through science-driven knowledge, particularly in underserved populations, is central to the school’s expanding prominence in the global health care arena and to the success of El Centro.”

El Centro was born out of Peragallo Montano’s own background as an HIV/AIDS researcher in the 1980s, and out of her and her colleagues’ vision of a first-class research center focused on the development, testing, and dissemination of culturally tailored interventions to improve the health of groups that are disproportionately affected by various conditions. These include HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, substance abuse, intimate partner

and family violence, and related mental and physical disorders. South Florida’s high incidence of HIV/AIDS and its diverse, high-risk populations made the school an ideal setting for El Centro.

The translational science being conducted at El Centro is a result of the school’s established partnerships with community providers. Peragallo Montano has worked diligently to strengthen the school’s bond with the surrounding South Florida community. She has made it her mission to cultivate new relationships with local clinics and institutions, strengthen existing ones, and increase the school’s presence in the region. In addition to supporting El Centro, local health care organizations also serve as a rich resource of clinical placement sites where students receive mentorship and hands-on experience.

“Our extensive network of over 140 diverse clinical partners is one of the jewels of our program,” says Peragallo Montano.

As a result of Peragallo Montano’s leadership, the school was designated a PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Human Resources Development and Patient Safety in 2008 and redesignated in 2012. The centre’s objective is to promote dialogue and the mutual exchange of health care knowl-

edge with its international neighbors. Its work emphasizes patient safety education, curriculum and workforce development, and multicenter research projects in critical regions of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Peragallo Montano has traveled the world seeking opportunities to implement international student exchange agreements with hospitals and universities. Her groundwork has led to programs in Australia, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, Spain, and Taiwan, where students learn about global health care issues. The dean is also actively mentoring nursing educators and researchers in communities all over the world, including Korea, Thailand, and Chile.

The school’s work in the global health care arena extends into Haiti and Guyana, where projects based on an “educate the educators” model empower these communities to chart their own futures. In the aftermath of the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti, faculty conducted a one-year project to expand mental health capacity among Cap-Haitien health care workers in the diagnosis and treatment of trauma. And in 2013, faculty members traveled to Guyana to provide mentorship and training to personnel from Guyanese nursing schools (see story, p. 9).

## The Vision Evolves

As she looks to the future, Peragallo Montano envisions a highly ranked school with a diverse and extensive research portfolio and an ever-growing network of global partners in health care education and scientific inquiry, a world in which nurses take their place as the trailblazers of health care reform—as educators, researchers, and care providers.

And today, Peragallo Montano is pursuing a new dream, one that might have seemed unattainable only a few years ago: to build a \$16 million, five-story, state-of-the-art Simulation Hospital that will be the region’s premier center for simulation immersion (see story, p. 20). She sees the school as a pioneer and leader in simulation, the gold standard for nursing and health care education of the future.

Whether Peragallo Montano is speaking to an international audience of 1,000 or to a group of new students, you know she is invested with heart and soul in the school that has come so far in just ten years. If there is one thing she knows for sure, it is this: the school, its faculty, and its students are poised to make a major impact on health care—over the next decade and for generations to come.



2010

- SONHS adds M.S.N. in Nurse Education, Certificate in Nurse Education, and Minor in Public Health programs

2012

- NIH/NIMHD renews El Centro funding through 2017
- SONHS hosts the XIII Pan American Nursing Research Colloquium, the first time this prestigious conference is held in the United States
- SONHS is re-designated a PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Human Resources Development and Patient Safety
- For the second consecutive year, the SONHS is listed on the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties Honor Roll

2009

- SONHS introduces a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program

2011

- Commission of Collegiate Nursing Education grants the school maximum accreditation of ten years for baccalaureate and master’s programs and maximum new program accreditation of five years for D.N.P. program
- SONHS introduces the first Bachelor of Science in Public Health degree in South Florida

2013

- SONHS adds the first B.S.N.-D.N.P. in Nurse Anesthesia degree in Florida and one of only 16 in the United States



1970s

**Clare Good, B.S.N. '70**, was recently awarded a 50-year service pin from the Florida Nurses Association. She is recovering from open-heart surgery.  
amazingclare@bellsouth.net

**Linda C. Hake, B.S.N. '76, J.D. '84,** has been working for the past 20 years as an attorney with Martin Health System in Stuart, Florida. She is also a risk manager. [lindah15@comcast.net](mailto:lindah15@comcast.net)

1990s

**Mike Salmi, B.S.N. '94**, spent ten years on active duty in the U.S. Army, reaching the rank of major. He earned his master's degree in anesthesia nursing through the U.S. Army Graduate Program in Anesthesia Nursing via the University of Texas Houston Health Science Center. He served two tours in Germany; completed deployments to Bosnia, Macedonia, and Iraq; and participated in a State Department mission to Uzbekistan, where he taught Russian and Uzbek anesthesiologists how to use donated anesthesia equipment. He and his wife, Kim, have four children. He now serves as director of anesthesia for Portage Health in Hancock, Michigan. He enjoys downhill skiing with his family, hunting, and fishing. His ice fishing shanty is painted green with a big orange "U" emblazoned on it. [MSalmi@portagehealth.org](mailto:MSalmi@portagehealth.org)

2000s

**Sonique Sailsman, B.S.N. '00**, is a faculty student mentor for nursing at Western Governors University (an online school) and a full-time online doctoral student at Nova Southeastern University in Florida. She wrote an article titled "RN Navigates Road to Successful Online Education" for the February 11, 2013 edition of *Nurse.com* magazine. The article is located in the "End of Shift" section. [s.sailsman@umiami.edu](mailto:s.sailsman@umiami.edu)



## IRON ARROW HONOR SOCIETY

On March 10, 2013, B.S.N. student Nastasha Lauren Pollard was tapped into the prestigious Iron Arrow Honor Society. **Congratulations!**

**Adriana Ortiz-Coffie, B.S.N. '01**, was commissioned in the U.S. Army and became an OR nurse in 2004, then deployed to Iraq in 2006 for one year. She attended the U.S. Army Graduate Program in Anesthesia Nursing and graduated in 2011. She is currently a CRNA in the Army, stationed in Fort Stewart, Georgia. She is happily married with two children, Michael (8) and Chloe (4). She loves her foundation from the University of Miami.

[adriana.coffie@yahoo.com](mailto:adriana.coffie@yahoo.com)

**Annalyn Velasquez, B.S.N. '01,**  
attained an M.S.N. as a pediatric nurse practitioner from Florida International University in 2008 and a post-master's degree as a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner from Vanderbilt University in 2012. As of March 2013, she is working for South Dade Neonatology as a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner. [ztannalyn@aol.com](mailto:ztannalyn@aol.com)

**Kelly Evert Jackson, B.S.N. '06**, is a family nurse practitioner with a specialty in orthopedic trauma and geriatrics at Scottsdale Healthcare Hospital. She and her husband, James, live in Scottsdale.

**Eme Enyong, B.S.N. '07**, earned an M.S.N. from the Carolinas Medical Center Nurse Anesthesia Program/UNCC in 2012 and now works as a CRNA at Carolinas Medical Center. [emenyong@aol.com](mailto:emenyong@aol.com)

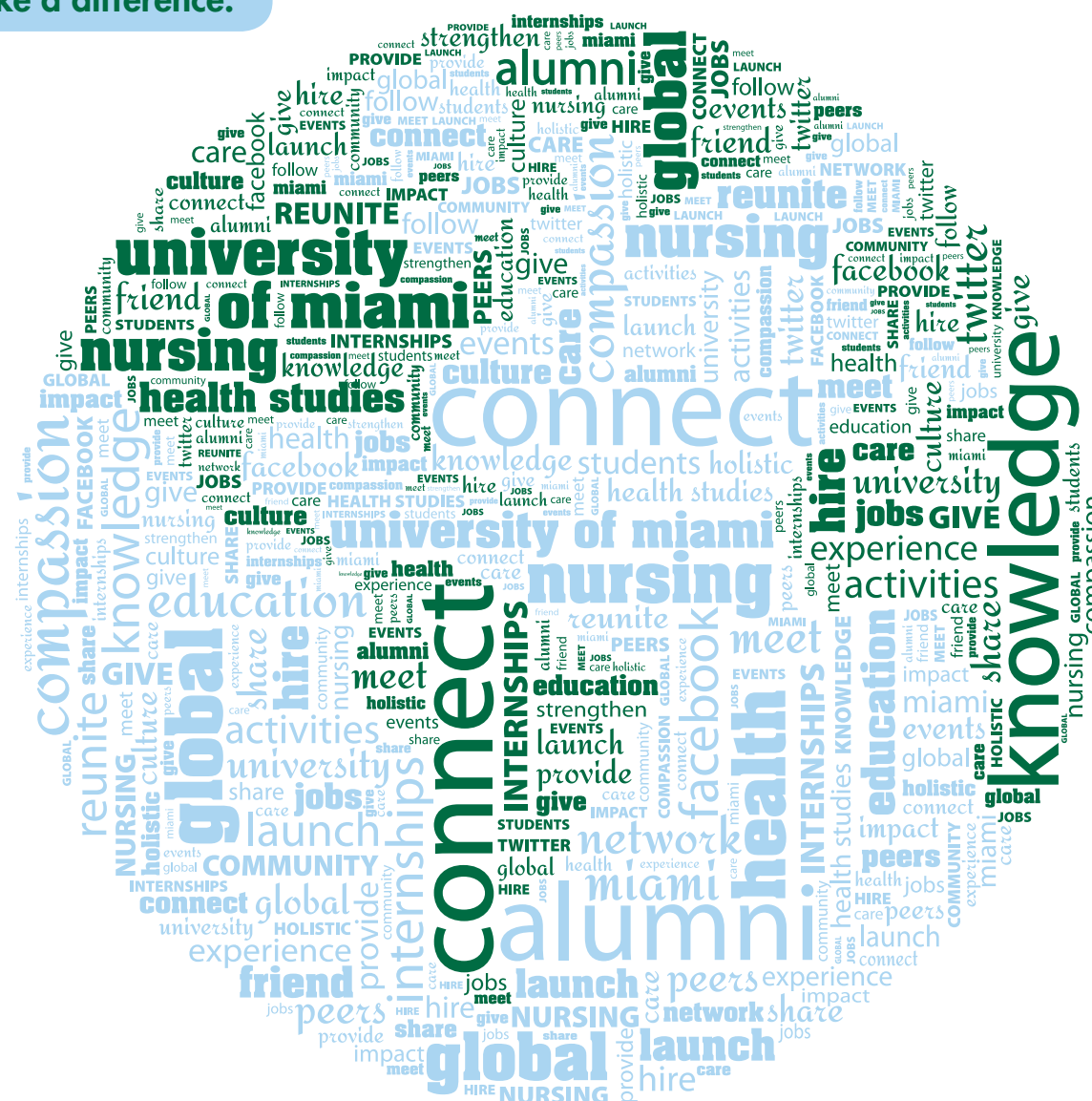
**Rosa M. Gonzalez-Guarda, Ph.D. '08**, was featured in the winter 2013 issue of *Obliterants*, the humanities journal of the Miller School of Medicine, for her work with the SONHS Center of Excellence for Health Disparities Research: El Centro. Through El Centro, Gonzalez-Guarda leads JOVEN: Together against Dating Violence (Juntos Opuestos a la Violencia Entre Novios). Visit [issuu.com/obliterants/docs/obliterants\\_winter2013](http://issuu.com/obliterants/docs/obliterants_winter2013) to see the story.

**Alex Medina, B.S.N. '08**, won the J&J/ Nurse.com Excellence Award for 2012, representing the entire southern region of the country, in the category of community/ ambulatory surgery. Following an eight-year career as the charge nurse for the OR at the Miller School's Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, he is now an OR nurse manager in a private facility. Medina completed his B.S.N. at the University of Miami on a full academic scholarship while also managing the GI department for a short time at Sylvester. AlexMedinaRN@yahoo.com

## 2010s

**Shelly-Ann Faith Elizabeth Gibson, B.S.H.S. '13**, has been offered a permanent position within the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County, where she was interning in fall 2012. As recruitment associate of human resource management, her responsibilities include new employee recruitment, orientation, and special projects. She will begin a Master of Public Health at Florida International University this summer.

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## Mary McKay, Wallace Gilroy Endowed Chair in Nursing, Continues a Legacy of Academic Innovation

**The nurse cannot understand why** her patient is deteriorating. She has just administered the prescribed dosage of three units of insulin, which should lower blood sugar to safe levels for patients like Ryan Smith who have diabetes mellitus. But Smith is having an adverse reaction. Besides complaints of dizziness and nausea, he is sweating profusely, trembling, and experiencing tachycardia (abnormally rapid heartbeat). In an attempt to calm him, the nurse addresses him by his first name. The frightened patient interrupts her, saying, “Who is Ryan? My name is Bryan Smith.” Looking down at the patient’s wristband, the nurse realizes she has just administered the drug to the wrong patient. Bryan Smith does not have diabetes mellitus, so the insulin causes a dangerous drop in his blood sugar.

Each year, medication errors and other patient safety breaches cause tens of thousands of patients to experience adverse and sometimes fatal consequences. Fortunately, in the aforementioned scenario, “Bryan Smith” is actually a computer-driven simulator in the School of Nursing and Health Studies’ International Academy for Clinical Simulation and Research. The concerned nurse is in fact a student who receives a scary but vivid reminder to always practice the patient safety protocol she learned in the classroom: use at least two patient identifiers when administering medication.

It is what happens next, however, that illustrates the transformative power of philanthropy in health care education. Just like in a real hospital, the student’s error is recorded and incorporated as a learning opportunity into the institution’s overall safety plan. This non-punitive approach to medical errors and near misses, known as the “just culture” model, is part of the formal patient safety plan being implemented by the school’s first-ever Safety Assurance Director, Mary McKay, D.N.P. ’09. McKay, who is also associate professor of clinical, is evaluating all courses to ensure that they include patient

safety topics, and she has designed an online patient safety module that incoming undergraduates must complete before beginning their nursing education.

While the school’s curriculum has always included patient safety components, this trailblazing approach to patient safety integration within the infrastructure of a nursing school is made possible by McKay’s appointment since 2010 to the Wallace Gilroy Endowed Chair in Nursing. Funded by the Hugoton Foundation, this generous endowment established in 1987 has greatly impacted the school’s rigorous nursing curriculum, which is known for its focus on evidence-based practice. Now McKay, supported by the Gilroy Chair, is taking the school’s patient safety programs to the next level.

“I believe that when the public comes into contact with the health care system and with nurses especially, they usually trust that they will receive quality, safe care,” says McKay. “It is our commitment and our duty as educators to provide the next generation of bedside nurses with the knowledge and the skills to be worthy of that trust. We are fortunate to have the Hugoton Foundation’s support via the Wallace Gilroy Endowed Chair in Nursing to help us in this mission.”

McKay is also capitalizing on her endowment to address the Institute of Medicine’s latest recommendations for information infrastructures and informatics competency education for nursing students. As chair of the school’s Academic Technology Committee, she is coordinating implementation of an electronic health record, or EHR, into the curriculum—another boon for patient safety.

“EHR systems are already being used by professional nurses at the bedside to access patient records and provide safe care,” McKay says. “Our students doing clinical rotations at the UM Hospital and at Jackson Memorial Hospital do not have access to the EHRs of the patients they are treating the way that registered nurses at these institutions do. We need to give our students the same opportunity if we are going to graduate nurses who are competent in and have been exposed to a variety of patient care technologies and information management systems in their coursework and clinical experiences.”

To this end, the school has just purchased Neehr Perfect (Networked Educational Electronic Health Record), and McKay is leading the implementation of this state-of-the-art electronic charting software in all graduate and undergraduate nursing courses.

The cutting-edge innovations implemented by McKay in the Wallace Gilroy Endowed Chair in Nursing have set a solid platform for forthcoming advances in patient safety education at the school, the core of which is a new Simulation Hospital that will transform 21st-century health care education. This revolutionary facility will give educators such as McKay the ability to assess and effectively address every possible safety breakdown in the health care setting.

“Our new Simulation Hospital will be based on the ‘just culture’ of patient safety, and Dr. McKay’s work, made possible by the Wallace Gilroy Endowed Chair in Nursing, is laying the groundwork for that,” says Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano. “It just goes to show how one forward-thinking individual

## Honoring Wallace Gilroy

Established in 1987 with a gift from the Hugoton Foundation, the Wallace Gilroy Endowed Chair in Nursing was created to provide a course of study that will prepare nurses who are well educated, clinically competent, dedicated to the nursing profession, and devoted to patient care at the bedside. Among the first endowed chairs in nursing in the country, the Wallace Gilroy Endowed Chair in Nursing honors the life of the late Wallace Gilroy, an industrialist, an investor, and one of the nation’s preeminent medical philanthropists. His legacy of generosity lives on through the work of the Hugoton Foundation, a major supporter of health care initiatives, medical research, and nursing education.

who chooses to give for the benefit of others can impact the entire culture of a school and make an extraordinary difference in the education of generations of nursing professionals.”

*Associate Professor Mary McKay is bringing a new energy to the School of Nursing and Health Studies’ patient safety initiatives.*



## Designing a Future

**Dennis Barbon, B.S.H.S. '12,** admits he didn't always want to be a health care professional. As a teenager, Barbon attended a magnet high school that prepares future designers and architects, but he was always good in science, even tutoring the seniors in the subject while he was a freshman. By the time he finished high school, Barbon knew he wanted a career where he could pursue his penchant for science.



"I didn't want to enter the paradigm being the norm," explains Barbon, who grew increasingly interested in hospitals and clinics from both an administrative and design perspective.

Then came the economic downturn of 2009, and Barbon noticed that many medically competent doctors offices closed down due to their administrators' insufficient knowledge of business and billing. He enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Health Science program at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, a decision he has never regretted.

"My plan was to use my knowledge in art and architecture and learn about medicine and business to create businesses using an eclectic, whole-brained approach. It worked out perfectly that the school started offering the Health Science program a semester before I graduated," he says.

Being at the school transformed Barbon's thinking about nursing. "My idea of the nurse's role, which at one time

I pictured as secondary to the physician, has changed completely since coming to the School of Nursing and Health Studies," he says. "I now realize physicians and nurses are different but equal partners in health care provision."

Barbon's career goals solidified for him while in Chile as part of the SONHS exchange program. "I thought administrators were removed from the patients, but in Chile I learned differently," he explains. "It's not one individual but rather a team of professionals that heals patients, and this team is built by an administrator. That I can still help patients get better without being at the bedside was an epiphany for me."

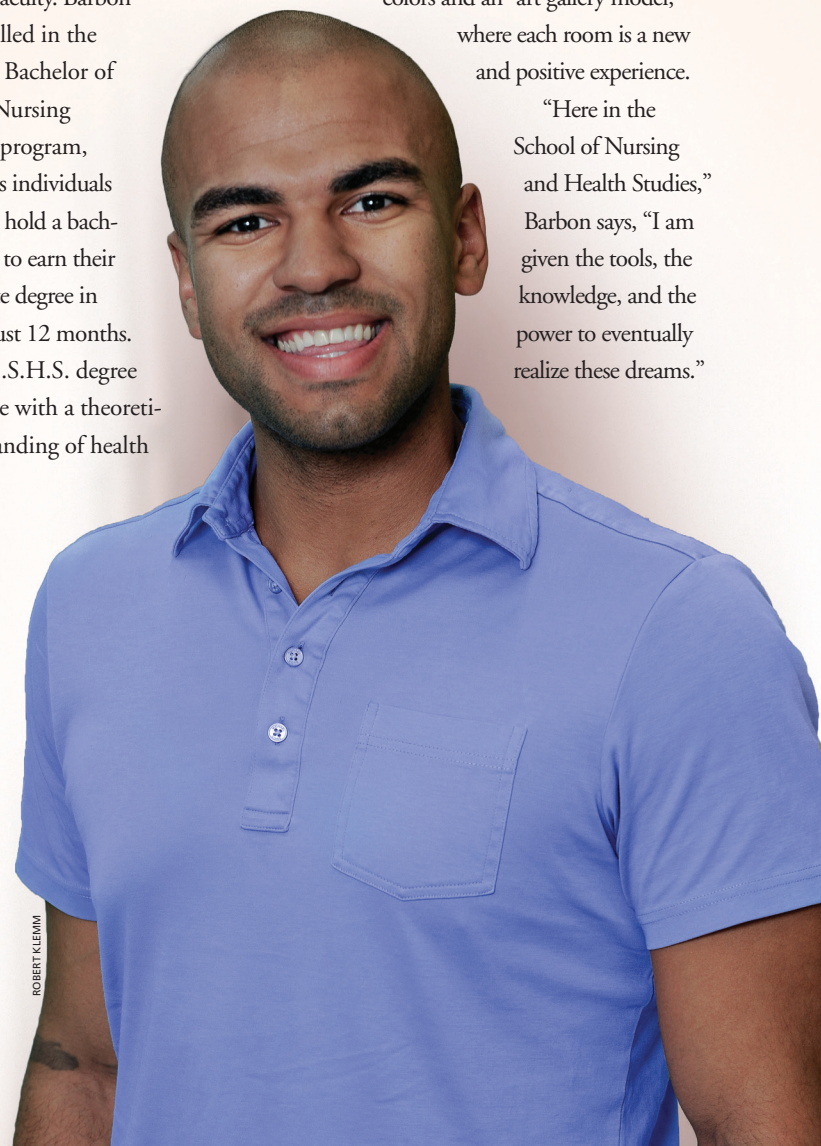
Having earned enough credits while in high school gave Barbon the ability to complete his undergraduate degree in three and a half years. He had been working as a student employee at the SONHS for two of those years and felt closely bonded to the school and faculty. Barbon is now enrolled in the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (A-B.S.N.) program, which allows individuals who already hold a bachelor's degree to earn their baccalaureate degree in nursing in just 12 months. "My B.S.H.S. degree provided me with a theoretical understanding of health

science," Barbon says. "Now the A-B.S.N. program is teaching me how to conceptualize and apply that knowledge. One of the most enriching aspects of the A-B.S.N. program is the opportunity for hands-on, direct-access patient care under the mentorship of health care professionals at clinical and community sites."

Barbon, who was born in Moscow to a Russian mother and a Cuban father, spent his childhood in Miami and Russia. He feels his multicultural background helps him empathize with patients from diverse cultures. He plans on earning a Doctor of Nursing Practice and working as a hospital administrator.

Barbon still envisions combining his love of art and design with his health care education to make contributions to hospital architecture. He imagines changing patient perspectives of the hospital from white sterile walls and stark décor to vivid colors and an "art gallery model," where each room is a new and positive experience.

"Here in the School of Nursing and Health Studies," Barbon says, "I am given the tools, the knowledge, and the power to eventually realize these dreams."



ROBERT KLEMM

## UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI SCHOOL of NURSING & HEALTH STUDIES



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Robert Louis Stevenson

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