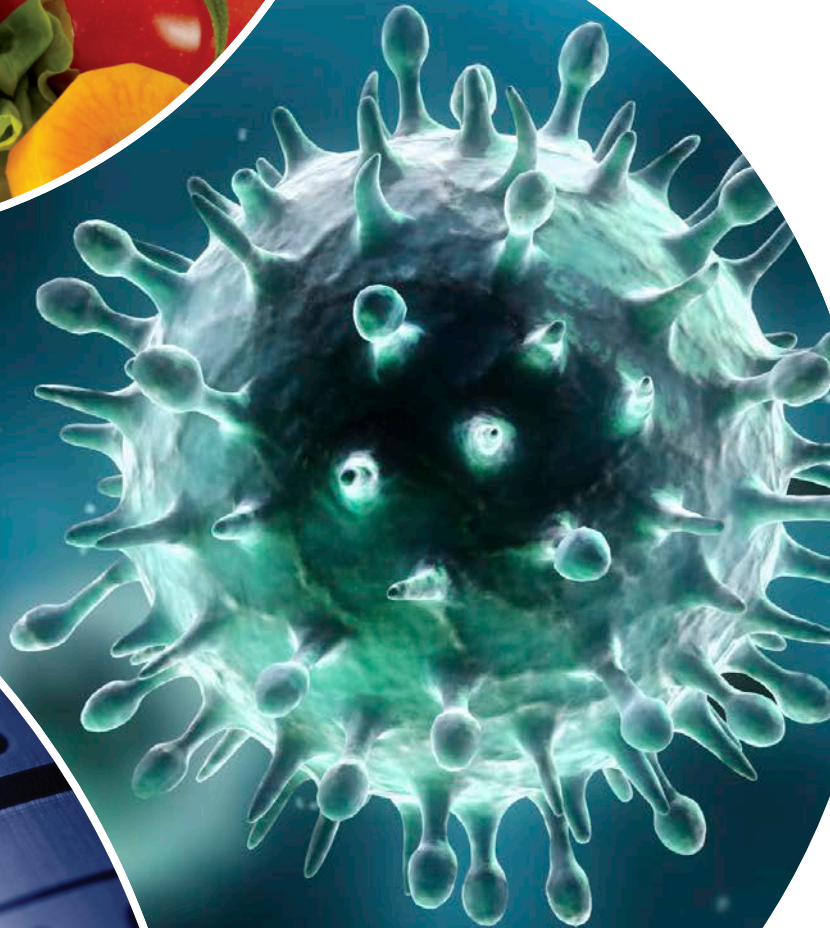


Spring 2014

# heartbeat

University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies



**FIRST B.S.P.H.  
GRADUATES TEACH  
A COMMUNITY MANY  
MODES OF HEALING**

MEASURING MINDFULNESS • • • D.N.P. GRADS EFFECTING CHANGE • • • NEW INFORMATICS MASTER'S PROGRAMS



**At the School of Nursing and Health Studies, we know that superior care begins with superior education.**

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 School of Nursing and Health Studies invites all who believe in the transformative power of quality health care to partner with us to build our shared future. Please make your investment through *Momentum2: The Breakthrough Campaign for the University of Miami* and help us make the breakthroughs that will make a difference.



## MOMENTUM 2

THE BREAKTHROUGH CAMPAIGN FOR  
THE UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

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## MISSION STATEMENT

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.



# Meeting the Needs of the Future

**Welcome to the Spring 2014 issue** of *Heartbeat* magazine. The past months have been a whirlwind of achievement, activity, and change at the School of Nursing and Health Studies.

Beyond the walls of our school, events in our local, national, and global communities make us acutely aware of our charge to build a health care workforce capable of meeting the needs of our world's future. This edition presents the stories of five alumni who are doing just that. With other D.N.P. graduates, they are transforming the U.S. health care landscape by breaking down barriers to health care delivery. We also introduce you to four young women who are making history by earning the first Bachelor of Science in Public Health degrees ever conferred by the University of Miami. We are proud to have prepared these professionals to treat and prevent illness at the population level.

In line with a transformed national health care system and changing patient demographics, I invite you to read about our expanded degree program offerings, and how, in an exciting trend, SONHS

alumni are returning in record numbers to advance their education in our graduate programs. We acknowledge the importance of our generous philanthropists in this latest development, since it is they who facilitate the scholarships that are developing the nursing leadership of the future. We would not be where we are today without the support of our donors.

We continually build our research enterprise and are now ranked first in Florida and among the top 25 in the nation among schools of nursing for NIH funding. I look forward to sharing with you the news on our research initiatives, including a \$1 million federal grant to reduce unhealthy behaviors, research partnerships with community hospitals, enhanced pharmacology education, and even an innovative study to assess the effectiveness of mindfulness training on health care decision-making.

In our continued quest to lead the field of nursing and health care education into the 21st century, plans are moving forward for the building of our dream facility: the cutting-edge Simulation Hospital on the Coral Gables campus—the top priority in our *Momentum2* campaign.

On a more somber note, we pay tribute in these pages to two exemplary

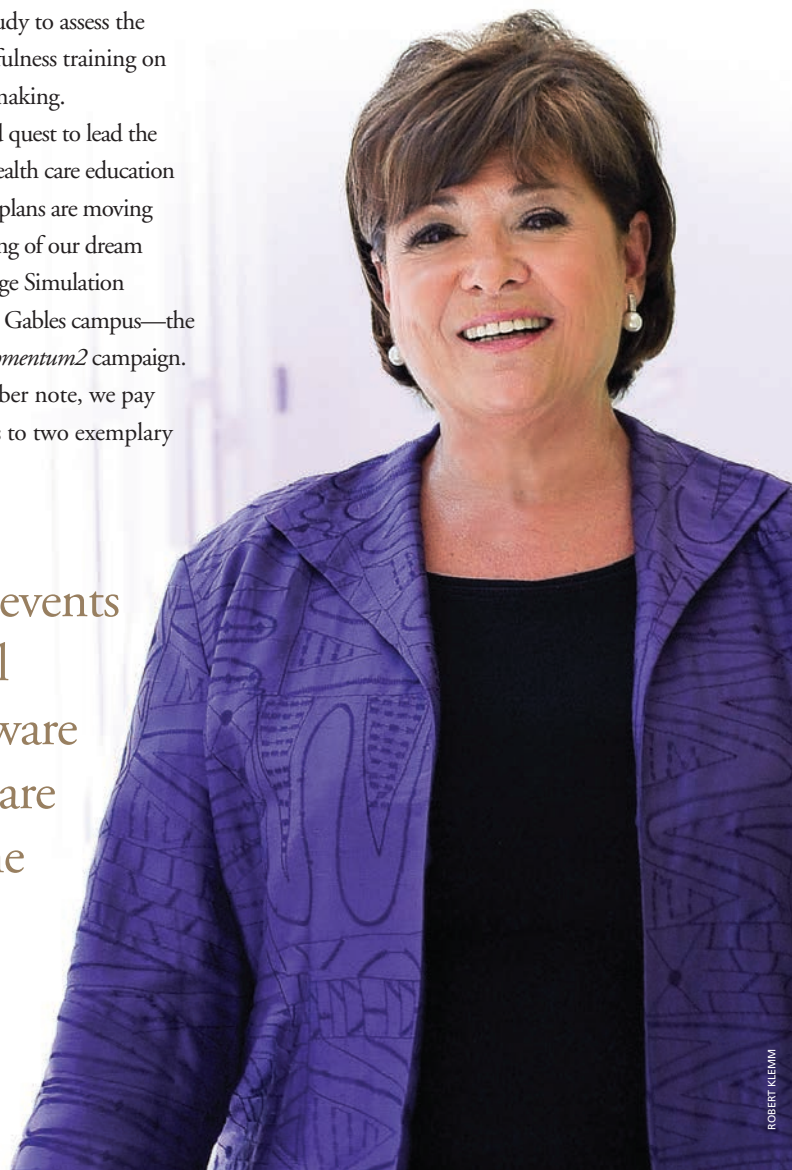
nursing professionals. Marie Elia Chery was my friend and collaborator, and Jillian Blyth Miller was a promising young graduate. Both Marie and Jillian left this world too soon and represent a heartbreaking loss to their loved ones, to our school, and to the patients and communities they served. They will always be a part of our school family.

I am committed to continue leading our school to the forefront of national and global health care education, and I encourage you to continue sharing in this journey. I hope you enjoy this issue!

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**Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano**  
Dr.P.H., R.N., F.A.A.N.  
Dean and Professor

“Beyond the walls of our school, events in our local, national, and global communities make us acutely aware of our charge to build a health care workforce capable of meeting the needs of our world's future.”



# SONHS Is No. 1 for NIH Funding

**Recently released rankings** list the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies as first in Florida and among the top 25 nationwide for National Institutes of Health (NIH) research funding to nursing schools.

“Translational science is at the core of our school’s mission,” says Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano. “NIH grants and other funding enable our faculty and students to sustain research programs that advance nursing knowledge, improve patient safety and care, impact health policy, and develop our curriculum.”

Research expertise at the school includes minority health, HIV/AIDS and infectious diseases prevention and care, intimate partner and family violence, family and maternal health, patient safety, and community-based health outcomes. Special emphasis is on ethnic and sexual minorities, as well as on Caribbean and Latin American populations, a natural extension of the school’s location in South Florida.

The school’s Center of Excellence for Health Disparities Research: El Centro was established in 2007 with a five-year grant from the NIH/National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities—the first NIH P60 center grant ever awarded to a school of nursing. The center, which received grant renewal for the 2012-2017 funding cycle, has engaged more than 2,800 subjects in research studies since its inception. In addition to

providing a framework for faculty scientists to do groundbreaking work, El Centro matches those faculty members with undergraduate student research volunteers.

“We provide opportunities for undergraduate students to assist faculty members with their projects, bringing to life the material students learn about in their research courses and allowing them to see themselves as future researchers,” explains Victoria Mitrani, A.B. ’80, Ph.D. ’86, professor, associate dean for health studies, and co-principal investigator of El Centro.

The school is also committed to addressing the serious problem of health care errors by launching several patient safety research initiatives. These include a study on the effectiveness of mindfulness training on ethical decision-making by health care professionals and a two-site study with the University of Michigan to help nursing students improve their ability to recognize pressure ulcers in hospitalized patients.

Research partnerships with community hospitals also continue to expand, such as the 40 percent appointment of Assistant Professor of Clinical Deborah Saber as

nursing science liaison at University of Miami Hospital, working with registered nurses and educators to boost nursing research, professional development, and patient care.

Julie Barroso, new associate dean for doctoral programs, brings with her an established scientific program in HIV symptom management and fatigue, a new area of HIV research for the school. On the horizon, patient safety and simulation-based educational research activities will expand through the Simulation Hospital, a planned five-story, 39,000-square-foot, \$16 million state-of-the-art facility that is the centerpiece of the school’s *Momentum2* campaign.

“This accomplishment reflects the School of Nursing and Health Studies’ strong scientific portfolio, its long-standing relationship with the community, and its commitment to the role of science-driven knowledge in improving the health care of local, national, and global populations, particularly the underserved,” says University of Miami President Donna E. Shalala.

*M. Christine Schwartz  
Center for Nursing  
and Health Studies*





# SONHS Launches New Programs in Nursing and Health Informatics

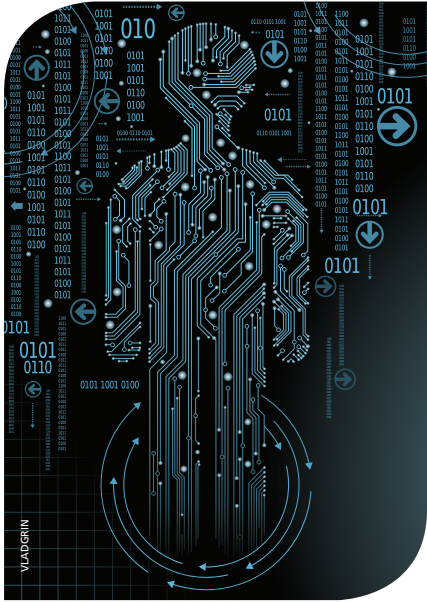
The School of Nursing and Health Studies will launch two new Master of Science degree programs in nursing informatics (M.S.N.-NI) and health informatics (M.S.-HI) in the fall 2014 semester. Certificate programs in nursing informatics and health informatics will be launched at the same time, with a certificate in public health informatics to follow in 2015.

The informatics programs are the brainchild of Todd Ambrosia, assistant professor of clinical and associate dean for master’s programs, who teamed up with Martin M. Zdanowicz, professor of clinical and associate dean for health studies, and Ph.D. in nursing candidate Christine Lippincott to develop the programs.

The fields of nursing and health informatics represent the confluence of health care, information science, and computer science to manage and communicate data, information, and knowledge in health care practice. At the SONHS, the two programs share a core of five fundamentals courses but differ in the qualifications and career goals of students they admit.

The M.S.N.-NI requires a B.S.N. degree for admission and will educate nurses to work on applications of informatics to the world of nursing and nursing management. The M.S.-HI program has a broader scope and is open to applicants who do not have a nursing credential. Health informaticists are generalists prepared to work in diverse settings such as pharmacies, hospitals, medical insurance agencies, pharmaceutical companies, and public health agencies.

The M.S.N.-NI consists of 34 credit hours, including a three-credit informatics internship, a four-credit capstone project, and final leadership retreat. The M.S.-HI consists of 33 credit hours, including a three-credit capstone. Either program can be completed in 12 months of full-time study or 24 months of part-time study. Capstone projects may include designing



and evaluating databases, data mining for a public health project, or—for working health care professionals—real-life applications relevant to their current work.

Applicants to the new degree and certificate programs will likely include professionals in the health care and information technology fields, informatics professionals who want to focus their work on health care, and career changers from diverse backgrounds. Evening courses and the part-time option make the program accessible to students already in the workforce.

“Growth projections for informatics are phenomenally high, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows excellent career opportunities and salaries for this field,” Zdanowicz says. “And because the Affordable Care Act requires use of electronic health records, it is bringing tremendous opportunities in informatics across the health care field.”



Professor Daniel Santisteban and his team discuss the SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment) initiative.

## Reducing Unhealthy Behaviors

The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has awarded research professor Daniel Santisteban, Ph.D. ‘91, a three-year, nearly \$1 million grant to teach a new generation of primary health care providers how to identify and intervene in unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, substance abuse, and risky sexual behavior. The project’s key component is an evidence-based approach called SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment). Funds will be used to educate health care providers and students in how to implement the SBIRT intervention. Among those slated to receive training are UM undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral-level nursing students, as well as School of Education and Human Development counseling students. The grant will also facilitate the education of health care teams at nursing school community partner practice sites, including University of Miami Hospital, Connect Familias, and St. John Bosco Clinic. The ultimate goal is to catalyze systemic changes in health care delivery in practice settings across South Florida.

## Mission in Haiti Includes Expanded Group

**On a Wednesday afternoon in early December**, as their friends and family back in Miami prepared for the holiday season and final exams, a team from the School of Nursing and Health Studies arrived in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. These students, faculty, staff, and alumni were there to conduct a five-day humanitarian mission with UM Project Medishare in the rural town of Thomonde.

By setting up mobile clinics at remote locations, the team delivered primary care to hundreds of patients from the local populace of one of the poorest regions in the poorest country of the western hemisphere. Along with immunizations, medications, health care education, and basic toiletries, the trip was “a way to offer hope to people who would otherwise never have a chance to, for example, have their blood pressure taken and receive other simple health care services that we take for granted,” says Sonique Sailsman, B.S.N. '00. “I wanted to be a part of that.”

Sailsman, who is president-elect of the SONHS Alumni Association Board, is no stranger to mission trips but had never been to Haiti. So when the trip, which allows master's-level students to earn clinical hours, was opened to alumni, she took the opportunity to join. She helped to organize the health clinics and participated in activities that connected the group with the people of Haiti, such as a community soccer game and a local street fair.

Maria Shojace, A.B. '85, M.B.A. '13, co-chair of the SONHS *Momentum2* capital campaign, an adjunct faculty member at the school, and a member of its visiting committee, says she went to Haiti to “help the school in its efforts to serve the needs of the international community and also to witness how exposure to a completely different world of health care impacts our students. That was marvelous to see.”

Shojace explains that in addition to staffing the mobile health care clinics in pre-established locations, SONHS personnel conducted home health visits, where they knocked on doors of dirt huts and asked locals for permission to provide them with health care services, supplies, and education. This, she says, “was challenging, because how do you tell a person the right foods to eat to avoid hypertension when they have to eat whatever they can get their hands on that day just to survive? It really showed us how culture and socioeconomic status play such a tremendous role in health.”

It is precisely this reality of health care that Johis Ortega, B.S.N. '02, M.S.N. '06, Ph.D. '10, assistant professor of clinical and director of international programs, wants for his students.

“The hands-on exposure our students receive on these trips reinforces the importance of culturally tailored interventions while we provide valuable services to the global community,” Ortega says.

*SONHS Momentum2 co-chair Maria Shojace provides much-needed primary care services to a resident of Thomonde, Haiti, as part of the SONHS mission.*





# In Memoriam: Marie Elia Chery (1954-2014)

**Nurse. Advocate for social justice. Researcher. Educator. Humanitarian.**

Woman ahead of her time. These were the words used to describe Marie Elia Chery by family members, friends, students, colleagues, and others who gathered on March 15, 2014, at Holy Family Catholic Church in North Miami to say goodbye to this beloved member of the SONHS family and in-country director of all School of Nursing and Health Studies programs in Haiti.

In three languages, people from South Florida, Haiti, and other regions celebrated the life of a woman who SONHS Ph.D. student Debbie Anglade, M.S.N. '10, remembers as “a humble giant.” Anglade collaborated with Chery and other SONHS faculty and staff on a Kellogg Foundation-funded project to assess the health care needs of women and children in the rural southwest corridor of Chery’s native Haiti.

“She was respectful of and intent on our mission, whether she was speaking to the Haitian president or minister of health, to a local on the lowest rung of Haiti’s socioeconomic ladder, or to a group of scholars at a consortium,” Anglade says. “She made everyone feel valued.”

Chery joined the UM community in 1988 as a clinic nurse in the Miller School of Medicine’s Department of Medicine. Fluent in English, French, Spanish, and Haitian Creole, she focused her efforts for more than ten years on HIV/AIDS outreach programs in Miami-Dade County’s Little Haiti community. After traveling to the isolated Central Plateau of her homeland in 2000, she dedicated herself to improving the health care of the region’s most underserved citizens, eventually becoming in-country director of Project Medishare in Haiti.

“Since we were little girls in Haiti, Marie was always trying to take care of everybody,” recalls lifelong friend and fellow Haitian nurse Jacqueline Clerville. “Later, she was determined not only to provide humanitarian aid to

Haitians but to empower the people, especially Haitian women, to help themselves and chart their own futures.”

In 2003, Chery joined the School of Nursing and Health Studies at the invitation of Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano to help the school strengthen ties with Haiti and with its nurses. Chery mentored nursing students conducting their clinical practice experiences in Haiti.

“Marie told me once that her greatest pride was in her returning students, meaning those who completed clinicals with her in Haiti and then returned to work on a volunteer basis, not for school credit or remuneration, but because they wanted to help,” Anglade recalls.

Chery worked to combat malnourishment through education and by establishing a factory that produces a nutrient-rich food product. She also established a chlorine factory to combat the cholera epidemic, helped to create community health clinics, and worked with an organization that provides business loans and mentoring to Haitian women.

“Although Marie is irreplaceable, we must honor her memory by strengthening our commitment to the people of Haiti,” says Serge Pintro, former Haitian minister of health and senior advisor to Project Medishare. “To this end, in June, Chery’s birth month, the new Project Medishare maternity clinic in the Haitian town of Thomonde will be dedicated in her memory as the “Ms. Marie Maternity Hospital.”

“Our school has lost a valuable collaborator in Haiti, our students have lost a wonderful mentor, and I have lost a fellow nurse and friend,” Dean Peragallo Montano said at Chery’s eulogy.





## Multicultural Nursing Student Association Thrives under Dynamic Leaders

**As a nursing student**, Solange Sierra realized the importance of joining a pre-professional organization. She also felt it was essential to select one that recognized her cultural uniqueness as well as her career aspirations. Sierra, who grew up in Colombia and spoke Spanish as her first language, soon discovered the UM Multicultural Nursing Student Association (MNSA), formerly called the UM Black Student Nurses Association.

Excited to have found an organization dedicated to the multicultural aspects of nursing, Sierra became a member of the MNSA in her junior year. A year later she was elected president of the UM chapter. Together with the UM-MNSA executive board, Sierra led the revitalization of what has emerged as one of the most cohesive and dynamic groups on campus.

Like its sister organization at UM, the National Student Nurses Association (NSNA), the MNSA welcomes students at all levels. The mission of the MNSA is to unify UM nursing students “through common interests and goals of academic success, professional awareness, and health promotion, with a focus on the unique needs of multicultural nursing students and the multicultural community as a whole.” Sierra and the MNSA executive board have fulfilled this mission by hosting a slew of culturally relevant activities.

Over the past year, the MNSA collaborated with the Miami Rescue Mission to adopt a family for Thanksgiving, organized a Christmas toy drive for Miami Children’s Hospital, joined forces with the pre-med honor society to promote a visiting speaker from Harvard, led community yoga sessions

on the Foote Green, and collaborated with the Toppel Career Center to organize an interprofessional symposium on future trends in health care. This year also marked an increase in membership from a handful of students to an all-time peak of 99 active members.

The MNSA also participates in campus-wide activities such as Canefest and Fun Day, an annual event in which UM student groups host activities for developmentally challenged citizens from the local region. Extending its reach to the national arena, the UM-MNSA was recently named an official student chapter of the Transcultural Nursing Society.

“As nursing students, we have a responsibility to all the people of our community, not just those who walk through the doors of a hospital,” Sierra says. “We want MNSA membership to be the mechanism that involves us, the students, in finding solutions to the very real problems of our community even before we become nurses.”



*MNSA leaders Yarilys Alfonso, vice president, and Solange Sierra, president*



# The Rewards of Community Partnership

**Today's health care climate** requires nurses to manage more patients, more paperwork, and more responsibilities than ever before. So why do our community partners still make time to mentor students? For some, it's a chance to give guidance and encouragement to the next generation. For others, it's a reminder that being a nurse requires a lifelong commitment to learning and professional growth.

"When I was starting out as a basic registered nurse, I remember being scared and not knowing what to expect," says Marcia Dodo, D.N.P. '13, clinic manager at North Miami Beach Senior High, a member of UM's Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation School Health Initiative. "Now I enjoy helping [nursing students] gain confidence."

For Elizabeth Smith, M.S.N. '09, D.N.P. '13, chief nursing officer at UM's Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, being a clinical partner helps her stay connected to her alma mater and exposes her to new ideas that SONHS students bring to the table.

"As a nurse, you can become complacent," Smith says. "Students challenge you; they provide that spark. Sometimes they prompt our staff to say, 'Wow, I need to get up to speed.'"

The SONHS has more than 250 diverse clinical partners who help students gain crucial experience with real patients and health care teams. Matching students with clinical partners is a complex task that became much more efficient in 2007, thanks in part to Jacqueline Gonzalez, M.S.N. '87, D.N.P. '13, a SONHS Visiting Committee member and the chief nursing officer at Miami Children's Hospital. She worked with the Nursing Consortium of South Florida to implement a Centralized Clinical Placement System that pairs nursing students with clinical partners throughout Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties.

In her nearly 30 years at Miami Children's, Gonzalez has seen many nursing students gain practice experience through her workplace. She loves seeing them return years later to visit their mentors—and some



*Dean Peragallo Montano with UM Trustee Thelma Anderson Gibson, left, and Alvatia Anderson, right, at the annual community partners dinner*

even come back to join her staff.

"The University of Miami is one of the schools we recruit from the most," Gonzalez says. "UM School of Nursing and Health Studies students are well prepared, highly motivated, and ready to go."

On February 4, 2014, the School of Nursing and Health Studies hosted its annual dinner to thank community partners for their service to students and the profession. Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano told attendees that students constantly say that clinical partners "go above and beyond" to provide robust learning experiences.

As Gonzalez notes, the gratitude flows both ways: "These students give back to you ten times what you give to them."



## SONHS Receives \$500,000 from Anonymous Donor

**The School of Nursing and Health Studies** received a \$500,000 capital campaign gift from an unnamed benefactor in support of its plans to build one of the nation's first education-based simulation hospitals. The five-story, 39,000-square-foot facility will replicate the true flow of activity in a clinical practice and hospital and will facilitate collaboration among nurses, physicians, and other health care professionals working in teams to improve patient safety outcomes. It will also be a test site for new health care products and patient safety research.

"The Simulation Hospital is the most exciting and forward-thinking initiative in our school's history," says Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano. "We are exceedingly grateful to this generous donor, whose commitment will undoubtedly inspire others to join our mission of preparing the next generation of health care leaders while enhancing safe patient care provision in our community and beyond."

The School of Nursing and Health Studies' Simulation Hospital is a key priority of *Momentum2: The Breakthrough Campaign for the University of Miami*.

## Legacy of Courage and Care

**When Jillian Blyth Miller**, B.S.N. '07, M.S.N. '13, was a little girl, *ER* was her favorite television series. "Pretty much anything with surgery and patient care fascinated her," recalls Jillian's father, Arthur Miller, B.S. '78, M.B.A. '80. The Millers never imagined that the little girl in front of the TV would one day be an integral member of a critical care team herself.

After graduating from the UM School of Nursing and Health Studies, Jillian was offered a nursing position in the Neurosurgical Intensive Care Unit at UM/Jackson Memorial Hospital. She soon moved into the leadership role of charge nurse, later becoming the first nurse in her unit selected to train and work with neurological surgical dialysis machines for neurological patients. Wanting to further her education, she began pursuing a master's degree in the Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Program at the SONHS. It was during this time that she was diagnosed with stage IV metastatic adenocarcinoma.

Jillian spent the next year waging a courageous battle against this deadly form of lung cancer, but she never stopped caring for others or thinking like a nurse. When she volunteered to participate in a Phase 1B clinical trial, Jillian shared with her family that she hoped the experimental treatment would not only help her but also make a difference for others in the future. Never a smoker, Jillian fought to debunk the myth that all who are afflicted with lung cancers are smokers. She also participated in her hospital's Young Adults with Cancer group, sharing up-close-and-personal experiences about her illness and using her expertise as a health care professional to "make it better" for other young people.

**"She was a 'Cane through and through. She was also serious about her career and oriented to personal, professional, and academic excellence."**

Jillian passed away before she could attend her second UM commencement ceremony, but in December 2013, Art and Ros Miller accepted the Master of Science in Nursing degree awarded posthumously to their daughter. Also in attendance were her brothers, Jared and Daniel, and sister-in-law Amy. Being on campus together was not a new experience for the Millers, avid 'Canes fans who hold season tickets and travel from their Tampa home to Miami for the games.

"Jillian would have been full of UM pride today," Ros Miller said. "When she was a child, no family vacation to Florida was complete without a trip to the U, her father's alma mater. She was a 'Cane through and through. She was also serious about her career and oriented to personal, professional, and academic excellence. We are proud of her and honored to accept Jillian's M.S.N. degree on her behalf."

As a tribute to Jillian's accomplishments and to celebrate a life that was unique and meaningful, the Miller family made a major *Momentum2* campaign gift in her honor to support the planned SONHS Simulation Hospital.

"Jillian's life exemplified the mission of the School of Nursing and Health Studies," Art Miller said. "The Simulation Hospital will educate health care professionals who will make patient-centered care their number-one priority, just as she did."





# New Careers in Nursing Scholars Observe Leadership in Action

**It's a busy November day** at South Miami Hospital, and Accelerated B.S.N. student Cristina Lee is following Carol Biggs, vice president of the South Miami Heart Center, on a tour of the facility. It is the first of the day's activities, which will also include observing Biggs in meetings on how to enhance patient safety, on the hospital's research and education efforts, and on optimal patient care and management related to patient stays in the cardiac unit.

"Everyone respects her," Lee says of Biggs. "She started as a floor nurse, and this helps her connect with her employees. She knows what they're going through, listens well, and makes sure they have their say."

Lee, B.S.N. '13, is one of three Robert Wood Johnson Foundation New Careers in Nursing (RWJF NCIN) Scholars who participated in a pilot implementation of the new "Shadow a Community Healthcare Leader" activity last fall, during which she and fellow scholars Francisco Coronado, B.S.N. '13, and Lila de Tancillo, B.S.N. '13, closely observed a health care leader for several hours.

The activity is part of the RWJF NCIN Leadership Series, which teaches NCIN Scholars the fundamentals of nurse leadership and exposes them to community health care leaders through

a speakers program. While the scholars enjoy hearing the speakers, they often wonder what it is like to be a leader in the real world. In response to this feedback, faculty member and NCIN program director Kenya Snowden, M.S.N. '10, D.N.P. '12, developed the shadowing activity. Next year, all NCIN Scholars will shadow a leader during their final semester.

The intensive experience "gave me a different perspective on the business side of the health care system," says Lee. "At school, I see direct patient care. Shadowing Ms. Biggs helped me see the role of nurse leaders in the behind-the-scenes administrative world of the hospital."

Coronado shadowed Stephanie Moss, D.N.P. '13, executive director of nursing at University of Miami Hospital. He watched Moss lead a review with

nurse directors of the hospital's new bed management software and attend a multi-department team meeting on sepsis policy. This experience taught him that "to be a good leader is to be a good team player and a good implementer." Another lesson he learned: "Being a leader is paramount to being an advocate for patients."

"Shadowing a health care leader is so important," Snowden says. "The scholars are able to see the business, management, and leadership sides of nursing, to see foundational skills like management and accountability in action, and to reinforce the leadership skills they are learning. In today's evolving health care system it is imperative to have strong leaders in nursing to directly impact health care reform."

To date, the RWJF has provided the SONHS with a total of \$720,000 in increments of \$10,000 scholarships to students in the Accelerated B.S.N. program. The SONHS provides all NCIN Scholars with a pre-immersion curriculum, mentoring, tutoring, and leadership training to help them succeed in the program.



*NCIN Scholar Cristina Lee, left, learns the ropes of nursing leadership from Carol Biggs, vice president of South Miami Heart Center.*

## Coming Home

**After Jessica Novoa, B.S.N. '11**, graduated from the School of Nursing and Health Studies, she began working with cardiology patients at University of Miami Hospital and with ENT patients at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center. She enjoyed her job but felt the call to take her vocation to a higher level.

"I wanted to have a greater ability to assess, treat, and manage my patients' care more independently," she says.

"SONHS graduates really stand out for our ability to jump in with both feet in any health care setting, and that's due to the rigorous program and the dedication of the faculty. Because of that experience, I returned to the SONHS when it was time to pursue my graduate degree."

### "The total number of alumni graduate students doubled in 2014."

In 2013, Novoa became a part-time student in the family nurse practitioner master's program, which she chose because it would prepare her to work with a broad spectrum of patients, from children to the elderly, and a diverse range of health issues. She is among a record number of SONHS alumni who are returning to the school for advanced degrees. A total of 28 alumni began graduate programs in January 2014, doubling the total number of alumni graduate students.

Three graduate programs—Family Nurse Practitioner, Acute Care, and Adult Primary Care—are seeing the greatest increase in demand. Even students with advanced degrees are coming back for their nurse practitioner degrees.

"To put what I learned into practice, I needed to be certified to work independently," says Siwei Liu, D.N.P. '13, a student in the SONHS Family Nurse

Practitioner program who completed her B.S.N. and master's degree in China. "The F.N.P. empowers us to provide direct advanced care to patients."

Several factors are driving this movement, according to Todd Ambrosia, assistant professor of clinical and associate dean for master's programs. The redesign of the U.S. health care system under the Affordable Care Act will lead to an anticipated 30 million to 50 million new patients—at a time when the primary care physician workforce is dwindling. In South Florida, there is also a growing need for practitioners who can address the significant health disparity issues in the region's increasingly diverse population. Well-prepared advanced practice nurses are needed to fill these gaps, and the

SONHS offers students outstanding clinical opportunities to treat patients from a range of cultural backgrounds.

"It's a living lab for multicultural health care," Ambrosia says.

The rising trend of students who are returning "home" to the SONHS for their advanced education is not altogether surprising. Besides their comfort and familiarity with their alma mater's state-of-the-art facilities and world-renowned faculty, older students are banking on the school's stellar reputation in the local health care arena to increase their marketability upon graduation. More than 250 clinical practice sites throughout South Florida provide graduate students with rich clinical practice experiences, mentorship, and often, future employment.

"Our clinical partners tell us it is a pleasure to receive students from UM and that they are very well prepared," Ambrosia says. "We produce exceptional advanced practice professionals. This standing in the community is a unique strength that attracts students back to the SONHS."

## Enhancing Pharmacology Education

The SONHS has received funding from the Florida Blue Foundation to develop and test a simulation-enhanced pharmacology education program. Led by Assistant Professor of Clinical Mary McKay, B.S.N. '88, D.N.P. '09, the study will address the issue of medication error-associated adverse events among nursing students.

"From an educational standpoint, success of the program will have long-lasting impacts on

the way pharmacology is taught at our school and other schools of nursing," McKay says. "From a research perspective, the project will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding simulation as a teaching methodology. From a patient safety vantage point, its success will improve safety around medication handling."





## El Centro Article Cited in White House Report



An article published by investigators at the School of Nursing and Health Studies' Center of Excellence for Health Disparities Research: El Centro has been cited in a special report released by the White House and endorsed by President Barack Obama.

Assistant Professor of Clinical Natalia Villegas, Ph.D. '12, and her El Centro colleagues published the article, "Predictors of Self-Efficacy for HIV Prevention among Hispanic Women in South Florida," in the *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*.

The article is based on "SEPA II," a randomized controlled trial that investigated whether factors such as age, living with a partner, employment status, HIV knowledge, self-esteem, and intimate partner violence (IPV) predicted self-efficacy for HIV prevention in Hispanic women living in South Miami. The study found that women who experience IPV are less likely than other women to display high levels of self-efficacy for HIV prevention.

"Inclusion of our findings in such an important White House document is not only a great recognition, it also indicates that the science being conducted at El Centro is having an impact," says Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano, director of El Centro. "We are proud to be a part of the coordinated response to the complex issues that affect the well-being of disparity groups across the U.S."

The White House report, *Addressing the Intersection of HIV/AIDS, Violence against Women and Girls, and Gender-Related Health Disparities*, was written by an interagency Federal Working Group that was convened under a presidential memorandum to address the overlapping challenges of HIV/AIDS and violence against females across the U.S. It was presented at the U.S. Conference on HIV/AIDS in New Orleans, Louisiana, on September 8, 2013.

## SONHS and UM Hospital Co-Host Satellite of Statewide Nursing Summit

The School of Nursing and Health Studies teamed up with University of Miami Hospital (UMH) to co-host the South Florida Satellite Center of the Florida Blue Foundation and Florida Action Coalition's 2013 Statewide Nursing Summit at UMH in November 2013. University of Miami President Donna E. Shalala delivered the keynote address via simulcast from the main location at University of South Florida in Tampa.

"I can think of no better time to be a nurse," said President Shalala. "To take a large step in social policy, you need consensus, and nurses are the key to this process. We are entering the golden age of nursing."

Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano opened the South Florida Satellite Center with similar words of encouragement: "The people in this room today will have a voice in the future of nursing in Florida."

"Despite the degree of uncertainty that exists about the future of health care, this summit is exactly what health care thought leaders should be doing," said CEO of UMH David Zambrana, D.N.P. '09, who delivered opening remarks on the second day of the event.





# FIRST CLASS

By Yolanda Mancilla and Meredith Camel, M.F.A. '12

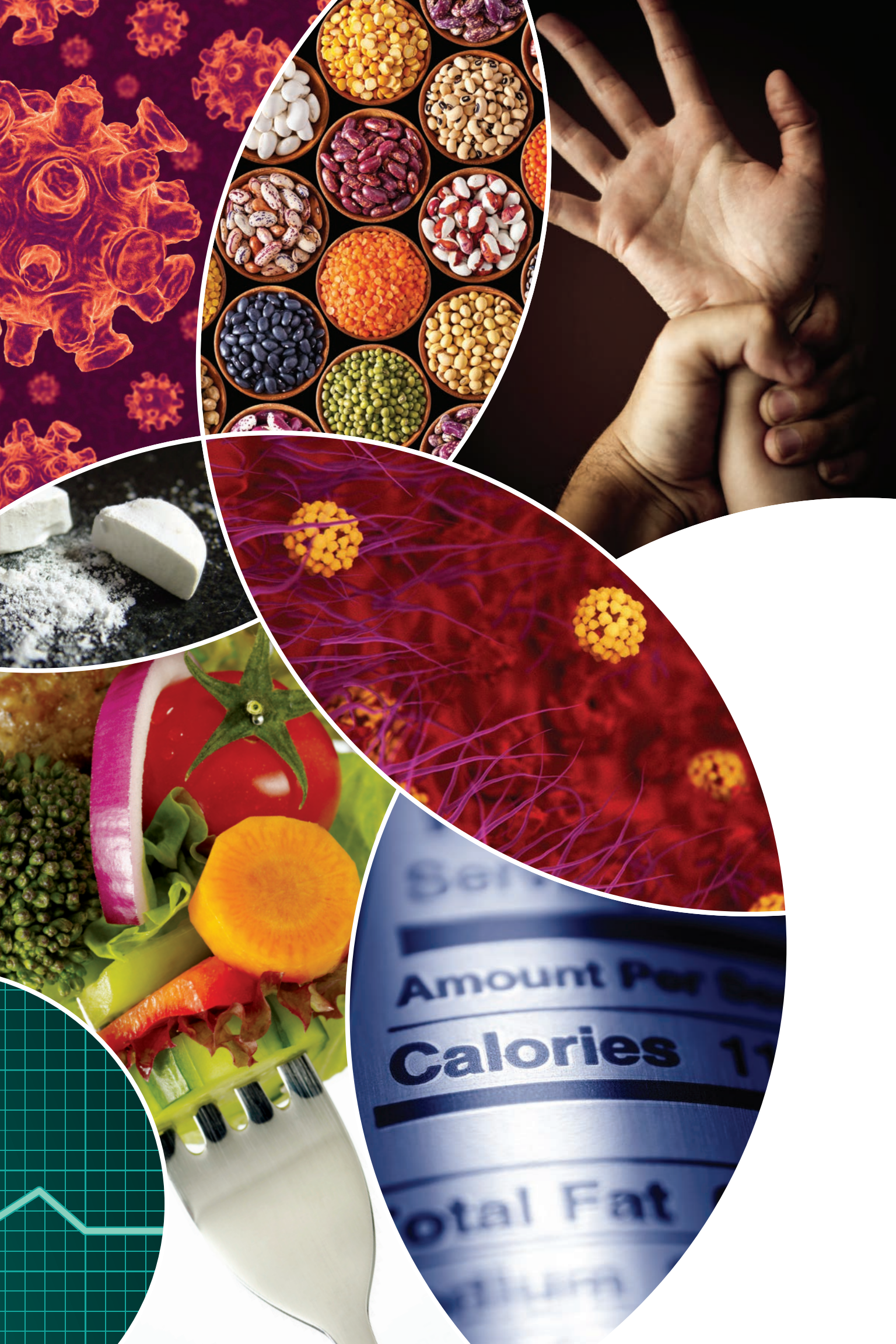
On their way to becoming UM's first Bachelor of Science in Public Health graduates, these students served on the front lines at a domestic violence shelter, doing research, providing education, and learning the many facets of helping a community heal.

These students all aspire to make a difference in health care from a population-based, rather than individual-based, approach. So in 2012 they each joined the inaugural cohort of Southeastern Florida's first B.S.P.H. program. A core course in their senior year not only reinforced their commitment to public health, it enabled them to help a most vulnerable population before they even graduated.

**This spring**, four School of Nursing and Health Studies students did what no University of Miami student has done

before—graduate with a







While enrolled in the Field Practicum in Community Health, the B.S.P.H. students—Cristina Ballesteros, Juliana Prieto, Esther Augustin, and Stephanie Maestri—visited the Miami-Dade Community Action and Human Services Department’s Coordinated Victims Assistance Center (CVAC) every Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. This walk-in domestic violence agency offers wraparound services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Clients complete an intake form and danger assessment that estimates their risk for domestic violence homicide through questions such as: Does your abuser own a gun? Has he/she ever threatened your life verbally? Has he ever hit you while you were pregnant? Working under their preceptor, Assistant Professor Emma Mitchell, the students analyzed the responses.

“The answers to these questions allow for the abuse to be assigned a ‘danger level,’” Augustin explains. “We also looked at whether demographic factors, such as victims’ original country of birth, have any influence on their danger level.”

Augustin and her classmates also implemented a survey that assessed critical gaps in health education. What they discovered helped them to build a health education program for CVAC clients. This is just one component of several research studies led by Assistant Professor Rosa M.

Gonzalez-Guarda, Ph.D. ’08, who has been working with the agency since 2009.

“The survey responses reveal that a number of [CVAC clients] want to learn about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections—and how to use condoms properly because they don’t know,” Prieto says. “Nutrition is also a big area they want to know more about, not just for themselves but so they can properly feed their children once they leave the abusive relationship.”

To empower CVAC clients with information that can prevent disease and promote wellness, the B.S.P.H. students teamed up to create and facilitate health education classes. Ballesteros and Prieto delivered a presentation on the prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, while Augustin and Maestri taught participants about nutrition and demonstrated how to make healthy, affordable meals.

“We designed the course to focus on eating healthy using foods this population actually eats and can afford, rather than lecture about the benefits of organic foods, for example, or something else that wouldn’t be realistic for their socioeconomic status,” Maestri explains.

During National Public Health Awareness Week in April, the students presented posters at the SONHS on the findings of their comprehensive community assessments and on their experiences in creating and teaching the classes at CVAC.

## CULTURAL AWAKENING

For our B.S.P.H. students, the CVAC field practicum is driving home the importance of taking cultural and economic nuances into account for every patient population.

“I’ve definitely become increasingly open-minded and more culturally aware through the B.S.P.H. experience,” Ballesteros says. “I’ve learned that identity really is related to health and that you have to understand where people come from in order to best serve them. Another revelation for me is that public health involves not only the treatment of many people at once, it involves and requires a team of many experts in different areas to implement interventions.”

Last summer, Ballesteros completed the prestigious Summer Research with NIDA (National Institute on Drug Abuse) program, an experience that reaffirmed for her the importance of a team approach to public health science. At NIDA, she worked with professionals in public health, psychology, neurosciences, and several other disciplines to investigate risk and protective factors in HIV transmission and drug use among a population of men who have sex with men. She hopes to pursue doctoral studies, and is on a mission to encourage students from marginalized populations, including her own, to enter the field.



SONHS Assistant Professor Emma Mitchell, center, with first B.S.P.H. graduates Stephanie Maestri, Esther Augustin, Juliana Prieto, and Cristina Ballesteros



“Because we as Latino women have the worst outcomes in various categories of health, we need to be fully represented among those who are leading the search for solutions,” Ballesteros says.

Maestri became interested in health care in her sophomore year of high school after traveling to Ecuador through a community service project and working with Florida’s migrant child population. As a volunteer at the UM/JMH Center for Patient Safety, she learned about population-based interventions and discovered that public health was the field that would allow

That’s why health care is so expensive.”

As a Gates Millennium Scholar, Prieto receives a scholarship that covers undergraduate tuition as well as a graduate degree in public health. She plans to specialize in maternal health and environmental health issues—along with addressing global health disparities, a topic with which she has firsthand experience.

“My family comes from one of the poorest, most rural parts of Mexico,” she says. “My grandfather, who is a diabetic, doesn’t have access to clean water or health care. This brings home the reality of health disparities for me.”

They’re not just talking about what they read in a textbook; they’ve lived it. When I began the B.S.P.H., I was looking no further than the bachelor’s degree, but now I’m pursuing a public health internship at the Centers for Disease Control and considering an M.P.H.,” she says.

Whether or not they enter the program with prior global health experience, B.S.P.H. students have an opportunity to gain a firsthand understanding of international health care systems by participating in the school’s Global Health Mini-Mesters. While in Chile during winter break this year, Maestri shadowed a nurse midwife and social worker. She was particularly impressed by that country’s focus on prevention and early intervention.

“It’s more public health in action than bedside care, which is the predominant model in the U.S.,” she says. “In one case, social workers treated a drug abuse case by caring for the entire family instead of focusing on the individual.”

Despite beginning just four years ago, the B.S.P.H. program at the School of Nursing and Health Studies is growing quickly. There are presently 15 students enrolled, 134 applicants for the 2014 freshman class, and 84 students from across the University taking the school’s public health minor. The program’s most recent accomplishment is the approval of a new “4 + 1” combined bachelor’s and master’s degree program. This partnership with the Miller School of Medicine will allow academically qualified students to complete their B.S.P.H. and M.P.H. or M.S.P.H. degrees in only five years.

Martin Zdanowicz, the School of Nursing and Health Studies’ associate dean for health studies, says that the B.S.P.H. program illustrates how the school is keeping pace with the needs of the 21st century health care arena. “The Association of Schools of Public Health projects a need for 250,000 public health workers by the year 2020,” Zdanowicz says. “Our graduates will enter the job market armed with a specialized degree and having acquired the tools needed to make a great impact in the public health field.”

## “Identity really is related to health, and you have to understand where people come from in order to best serve them.”

her to do the most good for society. A member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Maestri graduated with a minor in business administration and plans to pursue her Master of Public Health. She hopes this will lead to a career in hospital administration or in the government sector, where she can influence policy implementation.

Prieto, who graduated with double majors in public health and psychology and a minor in education, changed from the B.S.N. to the B.S.P.H. program after volunteering at a hospital with pediatric cancer patients and discovering that her goal is not to care for sick children and adults but rather to prevent illness at the population level. She credits UM President Donna E. Shalala’s U.S. Health Care Crisis: Politics and Policies course with exposing her to different viewpoints about health care during the Congressional debates on the Affordable Care Act.

“I didn’t realize how big a problem health insurance is in this country,” Prieto says. “Many people lack health insurance and therefore don’t go to doctors until they’re really sick, so a large segment of the population is not preventing illness, just treating it.

Augustin, too, has a deep, personal connection to global community health needs. She has worked as a licensed practical nurse since graduating from high school but decided to pursue a public health career because “public health helps you understand the ‘why’ of health issues...figuring out why people’s health is bad and why they’ve let it deteriorate.”

One of seven siblings, Augustin has an older sister who is pursuing a doctorate in psychology at UM, a father who is a pastor, and a mother who is a licensed practical nurse. Her family was initially confused about why she was pursuing a degree in public health instead of nursing. She told them, “I will still be helping people, just in a different capacity than at the bedside.”

Besides wanting to follow in her sister’s footsteps as a ‘Cane, Augustin’s Haitian heritage played a role in her decision to enroll in the School of Nursing and Health Studies. “UM is involved with Haiti in many areas aimed at improving the health of my ancestors’ homeland,” she says. “Haiti needs public health expertise.”

Most rewarding for Augustin has been “interacting with public health professionals of the caliber we have at UM.

M E A S U R I N G

# MINDFULNESS

By Ginny Pickles

**BUZZING ALARMS**, flashing monitors, beeping equipment, ringing phones—these are just a few of the distractions that clamor for attention in the fast-paced, high-stress world of health care. Ironically, the very devices that help nurses deliver state-of-the-art care can also cause a disconnect between them and their patients.

“In health care, we’re constantly bombarded with information and input,” says Mary McKay, B.S.N. ’88, D.N.P. ’09, assistant professor of clinical at the School of Nursing and Health Studies. “So much so that nurses are in danger of losing their special ability to detect the subtleties that show a deterioration or a change in a patient’s status.”

Adds SONHS Ph.D. student Jill S. Sanko, “As awesome as technology is in the clinical area, it can also be a constant distractor. It’s always in the background, potentially interrupting patient care and compromising patient safety.”

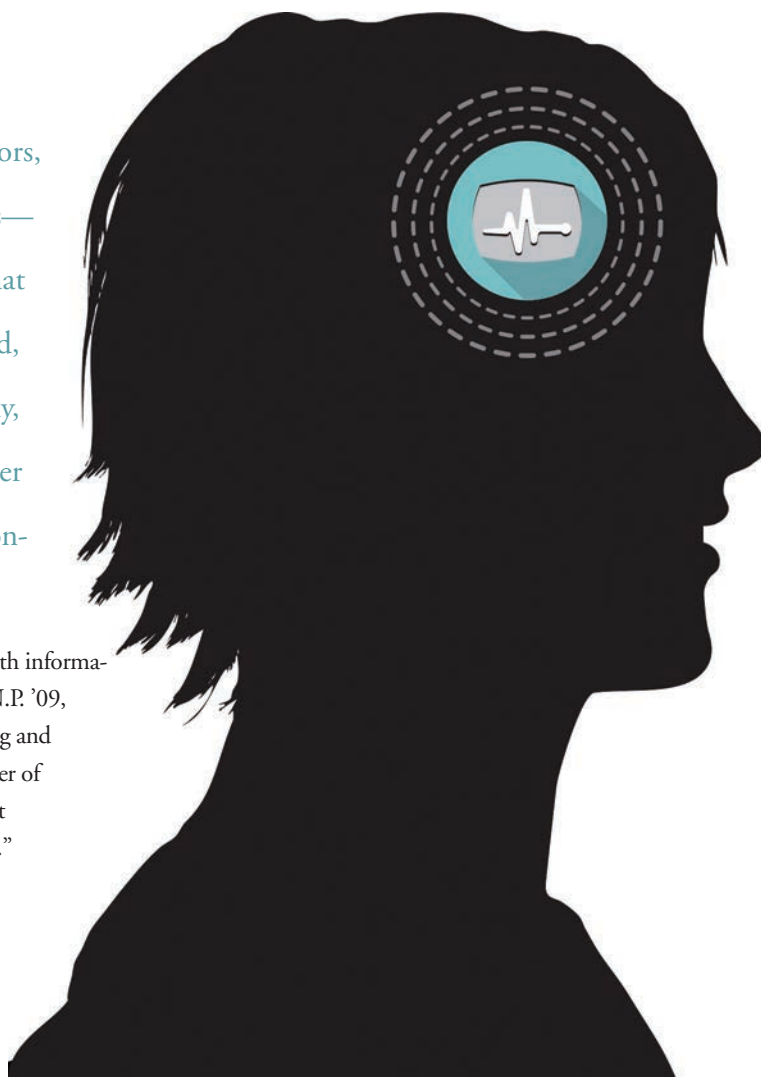
Concerned about the impact of this environment on patient care, McKay and Sanko began a study—funded by a University of Miami Ethics Programs Arsht Ethics Initiative grant—on the potential benefits of mindfulness training on decision-making among nursing students and practicing nurses.

“This is the first time the School of Nursing and Health Studies has been awarded an Arsht grant for a faculty-student collaboration, so we’re very excited to have this opportunity,” McKay says.

McKay and Sanko are collaborating with School of Law professor Scott L. Rogers, a founder and co-director of the

Mindfulness Research and Practice Initiative at the University of Miami. Rogers, an expert in mindfulness training, has designed a program specifically for the SONHS.

“While many mindfulness programs exist, we were able to tailor ours to the health care arena so that many of the examples used in the discussions are relevant to health care providers,” Sanko says. “It provides a familiar context to students, practicing nurses, and any other health care providers who may take this course in the future.”



## Attuned and Aware

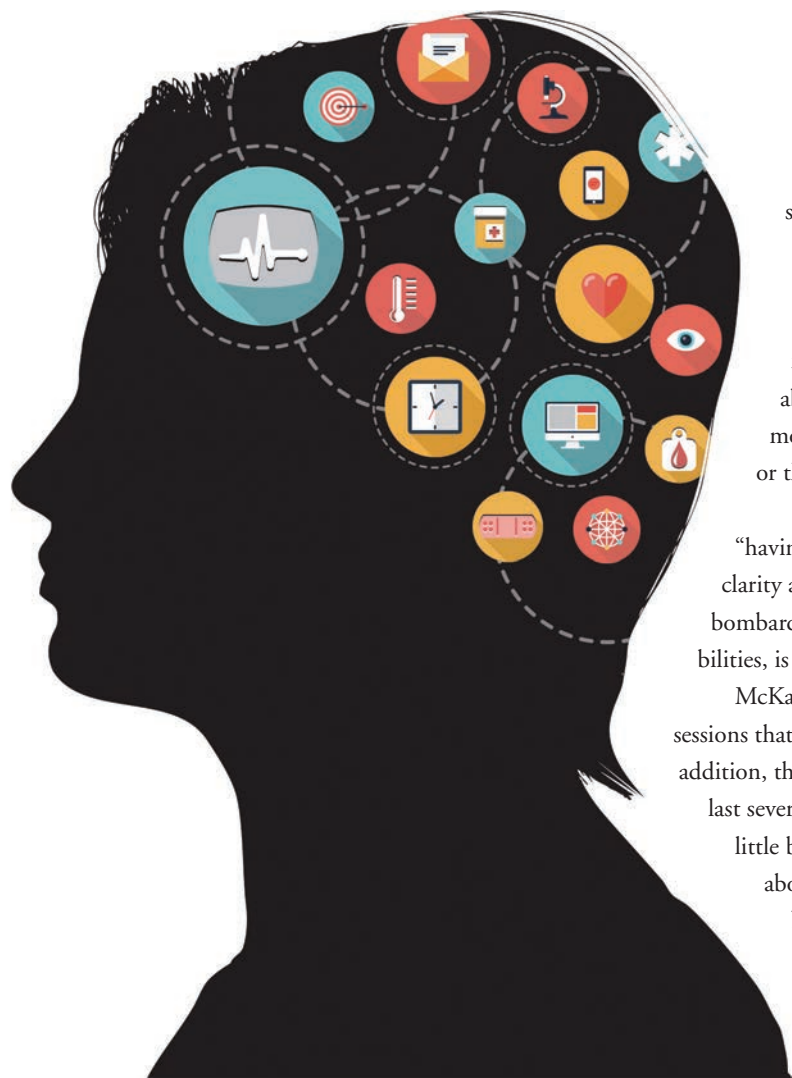
What exactly is mindfulness? Simply stated, a person who is mindful is fully present in the moment. More formally, mindfulness has been defined as a state of paying attention in a nonjudgmental way and being aware of the present experience.

“Most people have a general idea of what mindfulness is,” Sanko says, “but I don’t think they fully understand the mindfulness process until they participate in mindfulness training.”

Study participants complete a five-week mindfulness training course,



Researchers at the SONHS examine whether mindfulness training can help health care professionals stay focused on the present moment, thereby improving patient safety.



To facilitate practice outside the formal sessions, McKay and Sanko have created a mindfulness practice suite at the SONHS, a quiet place stocked with the appropriate audio tapes.

“We all have a million different thoughts racing through our minds, and mindfulness is about having a real desire to be in the present moment, as opposed to worrying about the past or the future,” McKay says.

“For many—and I include myself,” Sanko says, “having moments during the day when you have clarity about what you’re doing, rather than being bombarded with all of your work and school responsibilities, is beneficial.”

McKay and Sanko participated in the recorded sessions that are being used in the training course. In addition, they have met with Rogers periodically over the last several months. “Each time we meet, we learn a little bit more about ourselves, about the process, about mindfulness,” Sanko says. “So even beyond being part of the recorded sessions, we’ve had opportunities to learn from Scott.”

A mutual interest in patient safety brought McKay and Sanko together to work on this project.

“We know that distraction is often the culprit in human error at many levels,” Sanko says, “and we anticipate that mindfulness training may have a positive impact on patient safety. Any creative way that we can devise to help health care providers avoid errors is of interest to me.”

McKay and Sanko are looking ahead to how their work might influence future offerings at the SONHS. A goal of this project is to offer the online mindfulness program to the school for incorporation into the student curriculum and possibly as an inter-professional education resource.

which includes taped sessions facilitated by McKay and Sanko. These sessions, offered in a traditional classroom setting at the SONHS, are designed to encourage group dialogue and discussions aimed at enhancing awareness in everyday life. Participants learn guided mindfulness techniques, which they are encouraged to practice independently during the week.

“I think the biggest misconception is that many people think mindfulness has to do with just relaxation,” McKay says. “While relaxation may be one benefit that people can achieve, it is not

the overall intention of mindfulness. The real goal is to become more aware.”

McKay also notes that mindfulness practice is not meditation, although it is akin to guided meditation. “We provide audio tapes that participants can use to practice on their own,” she says. “Some of the tapes have to do with breathing and body awareness.”

Adds Sanko, “It’s more about becoming attuned to things. For example, in the body awareness session, you are guided to notice individual parts of your body.”

# Transforming Health Care, One D.N.P. at a Time

By Maria Padron

A capstone project requirement inspired these 2013 D.N.P. graduates to make lasting changes in their workplace and beyond.





**Several congestive heart failure patients** are being readmitted within two weeks of discharge. Uninsured women with abnormal test results are waiting months for further diagnoses. A loss of revenue generated by acute care nurse practitioners is the result of outdated billing practices. Cultural barriers are inhibiting breast cancer screening among women of African descent. There's a dearth of nutritional knowledge among patients in a low-income community.

These are not merely hypothetical scenarios, but real-world problems observed by members of the School of Nursing and Health Studies' 2013 Doctor of Nursing Practice graduating class. Launched in January 2009, the school's yearlong D.N.P. program allows students to remain active members of the workforce by blending online components and "practice immersion" experiences, plus one long weekend per month of face-to-face class interaction. Before they graduate, D.N.P. students are required to develop a practice innovation aimed at resolving an existing issue within the health care system.

As working nursing professionals, members of the 2013 class didn't have far to go to find health care breakdowns that could benefit from analysis and evidence-based intervention. Their capstone projects addressed gaps and barriers to quality, sustainable, cost-effective health care in their own workplace institutions.

"The capstone part of the D.N.P. curriculum is meant to provide nursing administrators and practitioners with the necessary skills to identify needs, collect and examine the evidence, and design solutions that improve patients' well-being across practice settings and communities," says Mary Hooshmand, Ph.D. '10, assistant professor of clinical nursing. "While the projects are very different, they share common threads: students must identify a major issue and design a pilot project aimed at effecting change in a manner that is sustainable and cost-effective."

*Heartbeat* spoke to five 2013 graduates of the program—William Messina, D.N.P. '13; Yesenia Villalta, B.S.N. '99, M.S.N. '03, D.N.P. '13; Rafael Camejo, B.S.N. '06, M.S.N. '09, D.N.P. '13; Joanne Dauer, D.N.P. '13; and Blanche Bell, D.N.P. '13—about the impact of their capstone projects on communities nationwide.



# Closing the Revolving Door

William Messina, a nursing administrator at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa, Florida, was dismayed by the high readmission rates for veterans suffering from congestive heart failure (CHF), 20 to 25 percent of whom ended up back in the hospital within the first month of discharge.

"The School of Nursing and Health Studies D.N.P. experience taught me that the way to influence positive change is through the application of a proactive, evidence-based approach to problem solving," Messina says. "Here was a perfect opportunity to make a difference in the real world of health care, in real time, using my newly acquired skills."

Messina did his research and learned that readmissions were often attributable to poor coordination and lack of continuity among treatment providers. He proposed an intervention that uses R.N. home health technology (HT) to monitor patient self-management skills in the post-hospitalization phase. After implementing the HT model for slightly greater than 50 percent of the CHF cohort treated in the veterans hospital during the four-month study, he found that standard care patients (control group) were twice as likely to experience readmission than the patients receiving HT monitoring. Messina mentored R.N.s in the new technology and engaged them in the concept that "discharge planning begins on admission."

Shortly before Messina completed the D.N.P. program, his role was expanded to include management of 45 nurses at an offsite location an hour's drive from the main hospital. His capstone project is being replicated, with a focus on reducing readmission rates of patients with acute myocardial infarction and pneumonia. He is also leading a pilot project whereby nurses,

pharmacists, nutritionists, and primary care clinicians use a shared medical



appointment clinic format to evaluate the impact of a multidisciplinary approach on patients' quality of life.

"When I presented these nursing-managed initiatives to hospital stakeholders, I had to obtain their buy-in by speaking to their needs and motivation," Messina says. "Helping non-nursing leaders understand the value of what nursing offers will pay big dividends to our profession in this rapidly changing health care environment."

# A.C.N.P.s in the Health Care Economy

Rafael Camejo, an advanced practice nurse caring for patients at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, was raised by his grandparents and spent much of his childhood in hospitals with a mother who was seriously ill with epilepsy.

"It was always the nurses who were there for us," Camejo recalls, "caring for my mother and trying to ease my fear and confusion. These early experiences led me to my chosen profession as a critical care clinician. My D.N.P. education showed me how to think like a transformational leader and bridge the gap between administration and practice."

It was this higher-order thinking that led Camejo to the idea for his capstone project. He had been aware that facing increasing practice management challenges, University of Miami Hospital (UMH) and other hospitals are relying more on advanced care nurse practitioners (A.C.N.P.s) to provide coverage in inpatient areas. But since hospitals are not billing separately for A.C.N.P. services, incorporation of A.C.N.P.s as revenue-generating, independent providers has not kept pace with the rapid growth of A.C.N.P. practice.

By tracking billable charges in the ICU and services performed by A.C.N.P.s during code blues and rapid response calls, Camejo identified a significant amount of A.C.N.P. billing potential. With that data in hand, he convinced the leadership of the hospital to approve a pilot study for his capstone establishing a cost-center for A.C.N.P.s that would generate hospital revenue, incorporate A.C.N.P.s into the health care economy as providers of reimbursed services, and





Rafael  
Camejo

## Saving Time, Saving Lives

Ten years after earning her M.S.N. degree at the School of Nursing and Health Studies, Yesenia Villalta returned to her alma mater to gain “the tools to do my job better at a systems level,” she explains. “I needed to learn more about how to create evidence-based programs that solve problems and help patients because that is what I do in my present position.”

Villalta, the Women’s Health and Preventive Services Director for the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County, could not have envisioned the extent to which her D.N.P. capstone project would change the way diagnostic services are provided to uninsured women in Miami-Dade County. Women who have an abnormal Pap smear are referred for a further diagnostic procedure called a colposcopy. When Villalta started the D.N.P. program, colposcopies were not offered at any of the area’s Department of Health clinics.

“This population is uninsured and low-income, so they had nowhere else to go because a private clinic charges \$1,200 to \$1,500 for the colposcopy,” Villalta explains. “Ninety-three percent of them had to wait 24 weeks for it. Imagine having to wait six months to find out whether or not you have cancer!”

Villalta began her capstone by obtaining approval from county and state Florida Department of Health officials to offer colposcopies in one of the Miami-Dade family planning clinics. Next, federal grant monies were earmarked for the idea. With the colposcopy service established, waiting time from abnormal

Pap smear to next diagnostic step went from six months to two weeks. An education and counseling session also was added to the visit for female patients.

“It is unbelievably rewarding to have been instrumental in implementing a much-needed mechanism for improving the mental and physical health of a vulnerable population in our own backyard,” says Villalta. “This program will prevent health care costs down the line because we are catching abnormalities at earlier stages. We just had a client diagnosed with cervical cancer and were able to link her to further treatment within three weeks of diagnosis. Once cancer is more advanced, treatment is more expensive.”

Villalta is now working to expand referral sources and disseminate information about the availability of this colposcopy to women in the community. “Now that the service is in place, we have to do the marketing so that a woman with an abnormal pap smear

knows she can do something about it in a timely fashion,” she says.

demonstrate financial sustainability.

“I really thought we were going to meet a lot more opposition to the concept of billing for A.C.N.P.s like we do for physicians,” says Camejo. “The supportive stance of the UMH leadership on this issue demonstrates how forward-thinking they are.”

Citing the Institute of Medicine’s landmark *The Future of Nursing* report, which recommends that nursing professionals become empowered to practice to the full extent of their education and training, UMH Chief Nursing Officer JoAnn Trybulski says, “Implementation of Dr. Camejo’s visionary idea into our billing practices fulfills this mandate.”

“The goal is to recognize A.C.N.P.s financially on a systems-wide basis,” says Camejo, whose capstone project turned out to be a launch point for a larger mission. “My hope is to expand this billing structure throughout all hospital departments until all A.C.N.P.s are functioning as truly independent practitioners.”



Yesenia  
Villalta

### Background

- 70% of cervical cancer caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV) 16 & 18<sup>2</sup>
- 80 Million of Americans infected with HPV<sup>2</sup>
- Cervical Cancer is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death among women worldwide<sup>1</sup>
- An estimated 12,000 new cases of cervical cancer and 4,000 deaths in the United States<sup>2</sup>
- Cervical Cancer costs \$400 Billion in medical costs and lost income<sup>3</sup>

# Removing Cultural Barriers

When Joanne Dauer, executive director of the Broward Diagnostic Center in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, started the D.N.P. program, she had been out of school for 33 years and was very nervous about returning.



Joanne Dauer

"It was an enormous decision," she says, "but my husband is a physician, and I have extolled the value of an advanced education to my six children, all of whom have graduate degrees, four of them in health care. I needed to practice what I preach."

Dauer noticed that most of the women in her practice, which is located in a community with a 67 percent population of African American/Haitian/Caribbean islanders, had misconceptions about breast cancer.

"Many of them thought breast cancer would manifest through pain, which is not true," she says. "Despite lower overall incidence among women of African ancestry, the mortality rate is worse because these women have been shown to carry the aggressive 'triple negative gene' in higher proportions."

When it came time to choose a capstone project, I knew what I wanted to do."

After researching the literature and learning that study participants connect best with someone of their own background, Dauer arranged for three lay health workers of African ancestry to deliver community-based education to local women in familiar neighborhood settings.

The educators used culturally appropriate breast models, self-exam demos, and free punch-out shower cards to promote breast cancer awareness. Pre- and post-education tests administered to participants showed breast cancer knowledge increased by as much as 50 percent.

"At the first event, a family reunion, they were able to convince 100 women, many of them relatives, to come in for breast cancer screening," Dauer says. "Aside from statistics, we are seeing an

increase in the number of women coming into our clinic for breast cancer screening. It's working!"

Dauer is now setting up an area in her diagnostic center where women can get biopsies if their screening warrants them. Where more complex care is needed, she is arranging a referral system of radiation, chemotherapy, or surgical services at one of the hospitals across the street from the clinic, an arrangement she refers to as a "one-stop shop." Meanwhile, lay health workers are still reaching out and delivering breast cancer education to the community's women in area churches and other neighborhood venues.

## Combating Obesity

Blanche Bell applied to the School of Nursing and Health Studies D.N.P. program shortly after moving from Miami to Mississippi to become a family nurse practitioner at Wilkinson County's Family Health Care Center, Inc., a government-funded clinic that serves the uninsured. Her motivation: "I knew I wasn't grasping the complete picture of what I had to offer as a nursing professional," she says. "I wanted to be able to lead change and mentor a new generation of care providers."

Bell was motivated to construct her capstone project by her shock at the lack of nutritional awareness in her adopted state of Mississippi.

"I know the suffering that arises from lack of knowledge," says Bell, whose own mother died from childbirth complications and who "can relate to being black and poor in the South."

Bell was particularly concerned about the obesity rate in the community. After meeting teens with diabetes mellitus on blood pressure medication and learning that a 22-year-old grossly overweight female patient died from a





Blanche Bell

weekly nutrition education sessions and taste-testing experiences for the children and their caregivers. She then enlisted local stakeholders in the idea of a self-sustaining community garden. Working in the garden would increase the children's and their caregivers' physical activity, and the fruits and vegetables they grew would provide them with affordable and healthy food choices.

"I had to jump through some hoops," she recalls. "This is a very poor county in one of the two poorest states in the U.S., so I couldn't raise funds by asking for cash."

Instead, Bell requested contributions from the local business community in the form of equipment, supplies, and free labor. She got the local garden center, lumber mill, farmer's co-op, and concrete firms to commit resources to the garden. She even convinced the Wilkinson County Corrections Department to allow inmates on work release to spread the dirt and prepare the land for the garden. Bell bought some plants with money from her own pocket, and a local farmer gave her fruit trees.

"The most gratifying part of this experience is to see how the community garden has taken hold among the children, parents, and teachers," Bell says. "I don't have to solicit volunteers. They ask to work in the garden. People who were oblivious to the concepts of healthy eating and exercise now come to me for nutritional information and advice."

Bell is working with an information technology expert to design a smart-phone app that will help manage diabetes mellitus and weight loss by receiving pictures of food and returning them to users with caloric and portion size information. She is also consulting with another Head Start program that wants to start a community garden modeled on Bell's capstone project.

## A National Transformation

From a snapshot of these five stories, a bigger picture emerges of how SONHS alumni are changing the health care landscape of America. Across the nation, nurse leaders who perfected their craft in the D.N.P. program are treating and educating the uninsured; promoting minority women's, children's, and veterans' health; revamping hospital administration; and revolutionizing health care practice in a myriad of other areas.

"In the new economy of care, with its emphasis on prevention, wellness, and teamwork between health care disciplines, the contributions of nurse leaders will be central," says University of Miami President Donna E. Shalala. "In fact, we cannot do it without nurses. The global impact of our D.N.P. program becomes stronger every day."

diabetic stroke, she realized something had to be done. "The problem was across the board, from elementary school children to older people, but I wasn't making any headway with the adults. So I thought, 'I'll start with the little ones and catch them early.'"

**"My D.N.P. education showed me how to think like a transformational leader and bridge the gap between administration and practice."**

Bell targeted the Head Start population of her clinic. She was seeing children with low iron levels, many who couldn't recognize pictures of fruits and vegetables. Realizing she had to "get creative to get through," she began

Alcorn State University donated the seeds and sent an expert from its School of Agriculture to consult on the details. The garden has effected a systemic-level change in the health of a community—a primary goal of the capstone.

# Welcoming New Faculty

The School of Nursing and Health Studies is pleased to announce the appointment of the following exceptional individuals to the faculty.



## Brenda Owusu

### *Assistant Professor of Clinical*

Brenda Owusu began her nursing career in Naples, Florida, where she worked as a nurse in the medical surgical and the cardiac telemetry units of Naples Community Hospital, later moving into the position of charge nurse at Moorings Park, Inc., and palliative care nurse at Hospice of Naples. She subsequently functioned as a charge nurse in the progressive care unit of Capital Regional Medical Center in Tallahassee, Florida, and later as a nurse practitioner at Quincy Medical Center in Quincy, Florida. Her most recent leadership position was as an administrative nursing supervisor at Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare in Tallahassee, where she supervised delivery of patient care in a level 2 trauma, 770-bed hospital. Owusu earned her Associate of Science in Nursing degree from Edison College (Naples Campus), then completed her Bachelor of Science in Health Care Leadership/Administration at National Louis University in Chicago and her B.S.N. and M.S.N. (adult/gerontological) degrees at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University in Tallahassee. She received her D.N.P. from the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies in 2011.

## Juan M. Gonzalez

### *Assistant Professor of Clinical*

Juan Gonzalez obtained his A.D.N. from Miami Dade College in 2006 and later earned his B.S.N., M.S.N. specializing in adult gerontology acute care, and D.N.P. degrees from Barry University between 2007 and 2013. His D.N.P. capstone project focused on creating a smoking cessation program to assist nurses in teaching and working with referrals related to smoking cessation. In 2006 Gonzalez began working in the emergency department at South Miami Hospital, where he was awarded Unit Nurse of the Year and Clinical Faculty of the Year in 2011. He joined the SONHS in 2011 as part-time faculty, teaching



clinical courses, and in 2013 he was named Professor of the Year. He presently teaches Nursing Pharmacology, Role Transition, and other clinical classes for the B.S.N. curriculum.

## Salma Hernandez

### *Lecturer*

Salma Hernandez began her career as a critical care nurse at Baptist Hospital in 2002. In 2006 she became an acute care nurse practitioner in the Surgical



Intensive Care Unit (SICU) at Jackson Memorial Hospital. From 2010 to 2012, she served as lead nurse practitioner in the SICU. She joined the William Lehman Injury Research Center/ Department of Surgery at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine in April of 2012, and worked to develop an international trauma training program there for countries that aim to strengthen their care of critically injured patients. This new trauma training program also prepares U.S. Department of State personnel deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya. She received her B.S.N. from Barry University in 2002 and her M.S.N., also from Barry University, in 2005. She is currently working to complete her D.N.P. at the University of Miami SONHS, where she has been a lecturer since August 2012.



A large, modern university building with a curved glass facade is illuminated at night. A massive firework explosion is visible in the sky above the building, with bright orange and white streaks falling. The building's lights are reflected in a body of water in the foreground. A large crowd of people is gathered in front of the building. To the right, a banner with the word 'HURRICANES!' is visible.

# Alumni Weekend & Homecoming

Whether it's been two days or 20 years since you last set foot on campus, Alumni Weekend and Homecoming 2014 is the perfect time to come back. There's a WHOLE NEW U to see, as Hurricanes past and present continue to transform the sights, sounds, and successes of our beloved University.

Mark your calendars today for the ultimate celebration of your place in Hurricane history!

**SAVE  
THE DATE**

**OCT. 30-NOV. 2  
2014**



## Setting an Example in Scholarship and Service

**Armed with her L.P.N. certificate** and hopes of a career with a stable income, 18-year-old Kenya Snowden left her home and extended family in Virginia Beach. At the encouragement of her aunt, Snowden came to Miami in search of job opportunities in nursing. Her first impression of Miami? “I was a simple country girl,” she laughs, “and I thought it was crazy here.”

Almost 20 years later, Snowden, M.S.N. '10, D.N.P. '12, has come to love her adopted city, where she resides with her 1-year-old daughter, “the love of my life,” Sarai Angelice. Snowden is now an integral member of the South Florida health care community, a leader, a mentor, and a passionate advocate for the nursing profession. It was a somewhat bumpy road, with detours and roadblocks to overcome, but each time Snowden faltered in her resolve, someone was there to encourage and support her—from her high school guidance counselor, who pointed her toward a nursing career, to a colleague at the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies, who insisted she earn her master's degree, to the donor who provided the scholarship funding that enabled her to earn her doctorate.

Snowden found her clinical calling while working as an L.P.N. in the emergency department of South Miami Hospital, where she is still employed. She earned her bachelor's degree in 2008 after years of often taking just one class at a time, as finances permitted. She credits Assistant Professor of Clinical Johis Ortega, B.S.N. '02, M.S.N. '06, Ph.D. '10, for coaxing her to enroll in the master's program at the SONHS.



ROBERT KLEMM





As a teacher—she teaches role transition and adult health at the SONHS—Snowden knew that earning a doctoral degree was important, but she was nervous about going into debt again with student loans. Then that barrier fell when she received a Florman Family Foundation Scholarship.

“The fact that my teachers had confidence in me, and that the scholarship was there to assist me financially, made all the difference,” she says, noting that she was further motivated by her desire to be a role model for her students. “How could I push my students to go back to school to achieve the highest level of education in our field if I hadn’t done that myself?”

With the knowledge she acquired from completing the D.N.P. program, Snowden is perpetuating the cycle of excellence by preparing future nurse leaders to succeed as researchers, educators, and clinicians. She directs the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation New Careers in Nursing (RWJF NCIN) Scholarship Program at the SONHS, which provides scholarships to students in the Accelerated B.S.N. program. She is involved in every aspect of the program, supporting the scholars and their mentors and developing and facilitating programs, such as an online pre-immersion program and a leadership series (see story page 11).

Snowden explains that her work with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is inspired by the knowledge that her own doctoral degree was achieved with Florman Family Foundation funding. “The visionary individuals behind these scholarships transform not only the lives of students but also the lives of all the patients and families who will be touched by these scholars’ future accomplishments,” she says.

Acknowledging the importance of philanthropy in developing the nursing leadership of the future, Snowden requires the RWJF NCIN scholars she mentors to complete a charity initiative. Here, too, she is a role model, participating in medical missions to the Dominican Republic every year.

“Giving back to the less fortunate is important for many reasons, but for me, it is a joy, because I was once in that position,” she says. “God has blessed me with so much that I have to pay it forward, which is why I teach and do the many things I do.”

Snowden is also faculty advisor to the National Student Nurses Association and the Multicultural Nursing Student Association at the SONHS. “I love all of these aspects of my job,” she says. “I love to interact with students to help guide and mold our future nurses.”

## Florman Family Foundation

The Florman Family Foundation was established in 1996 by Marv and Betty Florman, longtime Miamians who wanted to give back to the community. Today the foundation’s trustees honor this legacy by funding programs that were important to Marv and Betty, especially in the areas of nursing, education, social welfare, and the arts. Since 2009 the foundation has provided \$420,000 in scholarship funding for students in the School of Nursing and Health Studies’ Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.) program. This generous support enables the SONHS to help alleviate the dire shortage of doctorally prepared nursing educators.

“It is particularly gratifying to hear about the successes of our scholarship recipients, such as Dr. Snowden,” says Mark Blank, B.B.A. ’76, M.B.A. ’78, chairman of the Florman Family Foundation. “These stories give the trustees of our foundation impetus to continue in the direction that we’ve established: educating nurses to care for the population of South Florida.”

# And the Award Goes To...

At the **School of Nursing and Health Studies**, our greatest resource is our people. Our faculty members are inspirational teachers, but they're also active practitioners and researchers who work tirelessly to improve patient safety and our system of health care overall. Below are some of the faculty members who have been recently honored for excellence and commitment to the profession.



## Dean Inducted into Hall of Fame

**Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano**, dean and professor of the School of Nursing and Health Studies, has been selected for the Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) honor society of nursing Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame award. The International Researcher Hall of Fame eternally honors nurse researchers who are Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International members; who have achieved significant and sustained national and/or international recognition for their work; and whose research has impacted the profession and the people it serves. The induction ceremony will take place in July 2014 at the 24th STTI Nursing Research Congress in Hong Kong.

Dean Peragallo Montano also received accolades from the Miami-Dade County Commission for Women, which presented her with its In the Company of Women Award, Health and Human Services Category, at its annual reception on March 13, 2014, in Coral Gables, Florida. Timed to coincide with Women's History Month, this award, co-sponsored by the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade and Miami Dade Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department, celebrates women whose accomplishments, talents, and vision truly exemplify the pioneer spirit of trailblazing women and who serve as an example for our community's future female leaders.



## Recognized by International Peers

Assistant Professor of Clinical **Johis Ortega**, B.S.N. '02, M.S.N. '06, Ph.D. '10, received the Susana Espino Muñoz Academic Trajectory Award of the ALADEFE (Latin American Association of Schools and Colleges of Nursing). This award recognizes the academic trajectory of a nurse scholar in the field of nursing education, research, and/or academic administration who has attained national and international peer recognition. Ortega, who serves as director of international programs, director of clinical placements, and deputy director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre at the SOHNS, accepted the award on September 13, 2013, during ALADEFE's biennial meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay.





Rosa  
Gonzalez-  
Guarda

ROBERT KLEMM



Shayne  
Hauglum



Natalia  
Villegas



Todd F.  
Ambrosia



Mary  
McKay

ROBERT KLEMM



Jill  
Sanko

## What a Distinguished Fellow

**Todd F. Ambrosia**, associate dean for the master's programs and assistant professor of clinical, was inducted in April 2014 in Washington, D.C., as a Distinguished Fellow of the National Academies of Practice. Fellows are nominated and judged by distinguished peers to have made significant and enduring contributions in the health professions. They must have an exemplary career of ten years or more and be committed to interprofessional health care practice. The NAP was founded in 1981 to advise Congress and local governmental bodies on the nation's health care system, and it represents ten health care specialties. Its mission is promoting excellence in the practice of health care through interprofessional collaboration, advocacy, research, education, and public policy.

## Multiple March of Dimes Winners

The School of Nursing and Health Studies continued its legacy of being represented in the March of Dimes Nurse of the Year celebration, which took place in Miami on November 22, 2013. This year 12 students and faculty members were finalists, and three were selected as winners. **Rosa Gonzalez-Guarda**, Ph.D. '08, was honored in the Community/Behavioral Health Ambulatory Care category; **Shayne Hauglum**, a Ph.D. candidate, won the Student Nurse/Graduate category; and **Natalia Villegas**, Ph.D. '12, was selected for the Women's Health category. These honorees are celebrated for their extraordinary demonstration of compassion, patient care, service, and research accomplishments.

## Building Cultures of Safety

The Society for Simulation in Healthcare has presented assistant professor **Mary McKay**, B.S.N. '88, D.N.P. '09, and student **Jill Sanko** with the 2014 Program Innovation Award for Development and Use of an Electronic Adverse Event Reporting System for Simulation Encounters: A Feasibility Study. McKay is the School of Nursing and Health Studies' safety assurance director and Wallace Gilroy Endowed Chair in Nursing. Sanko is a Ph.D. candidate specializing in patient safety.

## 1960s

**Levanne R. Hendrix, B.S.N. '68, M.S.N. '84**, received her doctorate in health care administration and ethnogeriatrics in 2000. She works full-time in a profession she loves, serving our veterans in Menlo Park, California. She plans on moving to her new home on Lopez Island, Washington, when she retires in a few years.

## 1970s

**Annette M. Browning, B.S.N. '77**, completed an End of Life Care research study in 2011, which has given way to an interventional study being conducted at Stanford University Hospital with Critical Care Nurses.

## 1980s

**Carol L. Lindsey, B.S.N. '80, M.S.N. '91**, has served as an active duty commissioned officer in the U.S. Public Health Service for 27 years. She currently holds the rank of captain and serves as a clinical advisor for HHS in the Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Primary Health Care, North Central Division, which oversees grants for federally qualified health centers in the North Central region of the United States. In one of her many roles in the Public Health Service, she spearheaded the medical pilot program for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Flight Program in 1986, which was the birth of CONAIR for the United States, and she served as the first flight nurse for ICE. She has also participated in multiple deployments, including a training mission on the U.S. Navy hospital ship *USNS Comfort*, and hurricane medical relief activities. She has supported various events in the nation's capital, including the Presidential Inauguration. She resides just outside of Washington, D.C., in Maryland with her husband and two daughters.

**Mary C. Smolenski, C.N.P. '80**, has returned to Florida after working in the D.C. area for 20 years as a consultant and at the American Nurses Association as director of certification for the American Nurses Credentialing Center. She now lives in the Lakewood Ranch-Sarasota area and is retired from the Air Force Reserves, where she was a colonel. She still does some consulting, volunteers as a docent for the John and Mabel Ringling Museum and stays in touch with APRN issues. Her health policy textbook, *Health Policy and Advanced Practice Nursing: Impact and Implications*, which she coedited with another advanced practice nurse, was published by Springer in December 2013.

**Raylawni G. Branch, B.S.N. '84**, a retired lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force Nurse Corps, has lived a very full and vibrant life. Her education, civilian, and military career have taken her over most of the United States and much of the world. She is married to Alfred Branch, reared five children, is a grandmother to 13, and has three great-grandchildren. After she retired from the University of Southern Mississippi—where she is honored by a campus plaza, a yearly perpetual lecture series, and induction into USM's Hall of Fame—she ran for political office and was deployed on most major disasters in this country with the American Red Cross since 2004, including to Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. She considers herself an R.N. generalist and loves to mentor others in their pursuit of success. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau and the American Nurses Association, and she is a board member on several community civic organizations, volunteering many hours serving children and teens, as well as women reentering society from incarceration.



Family Reunion: Assistant Professor of Clinical Kenya Snowden, M.S.N. '10, D.N.P. '12, surprises Rafael Camejo at his 2013 D.N.P. Commencement with the couple's daughter.

**Helen C. Costa, B.S.N. '86**, at Costa & Associates, P.A., was one of 30 attorneys in the historic LGBT Swearing-In Ceremony of the U.S. Supreme Court Bar Association earlier this year.

**Yvonne Parchment, B.S.N. '86, M.S.N. '89**, a clinical professor at Florida International University and a nurse in South Florida for the past 30 years, was selected as one of the Great 100 Nurses of 2013. As an educator and practitioner, she advocates timely health screenings and maintenance of healthy lifestyles. She is submitting a grant proposal to examine the effect of educational intervention on prostate cancer screening in black men, having previously conducted a pilot study on the topic. Her community focus is on older adults. She organized and participated in a program on Alzheimer's disease at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica and collaborated on a project sponsored by the Florida International Volunteer Corps (FAVACA) to conduct training on care of older adults in St. Kitts and Belize. Community service awards include: 2012 Educator of the Year from Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Community Service Award from Representative Larcenia Bullard in 2010, and Community Service Award from the Alliance on Aging in 2009. She is currently serving on the advisory committees of the Dorothy M. Wallace Cope Center in Miami and Community Health of South Florida, Mental Health Committee.



## 1990s

**Kelli Guss, B.S.N. '94**, has been working for the same anesthesia group for almost 15 years, but in February she became a solo practitioner, providing anesthesia for different facilities in the Greater Houston area. This new schedule allows her time and flexibility with her family, as well as time to run her new business, MaplewoodsVermont.com, a luxury vacation home rental in beautiful Woodstock, Vermont. (University of Miami alumni get a "friends & family" discount!) Life is good! #LOVERMONT!

**Marisa Caro, B.S.N. '95**, earned a dual master's degree at Florida International University. After serving as a nurse practitioner for many years, she became disabled with MS in 2005. She now runs a nonprofit organization, Angel Society USA, Inc., that feeds people in South Florida. She and her husband live on a 2.5-acre farm with their nine children, and they farm about 20 acres of sugar cane in South Florida.

## 2000s

**Fran Civilette Downs, B.S.N. '01**, became a Fellow in the American Nurses Advocacy Institute in Washington, D.C. She is employed by the Miami Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

**Julie Rodriguez-Gomez, B.S.N. '04**, earned her M.S.N. in 2012 from University of South Florida and is working as an adult nurse practitioner at Palm Primary Care in Hialeah, Florida.

**Dee Hoult, B.S. '05, M.B.A. '10**, owner of Applause Your Paws dog training, has been elected by her peers in the dog training industry to serve on the board of trustees for the Association of Professional Dog Trainers.

**Melissa Cordovi-Nicholas, B.S.N. '06**, was immediately hired shortly after graduating from UM in the ICU of the Cleveland Clinic main campus in Ohio. She moved back to Miami a year later and joined South Miami Hospital as a SICU/MICU R.N. After working as a critical care nurse for eight years and expanding her knowledge by becoming a C.C.R.N. and an advanced R.N. based on the organizational PNAP, she decided to move into a leadership role. Last year she was promoted to become a patient care supervisor of the ICU and PCU at Doctors Hospital. Looking back at all of her experiences and success, she is thankful for her 'Cane education.

**Saul Alvey, B.S.N. '07**, is a home health nurse employed at Excellent Home Care Giver since December 2013.

**Brittany Hermann Kryston, B.S.N. '07**, worked pediatric hematology/oncology with bone marrow transplant experience for three years and is now in general pediatrics at a level 1 trauma in Raleigh, North Carolina. She is the co-chair for the Shared Decision Making Council, serves in the work life committee and implementing on getting PEWS (pediatric early warning system) at her hospital, and will be presenting data at the peds conference in April.

**Alejandro Lara, B.S.N. '07**, graduated in March 2014 from the University of California, Davis with a master's degree in nursing science and health care leadership. She lives in Folsom, California, where she works as a registered nurse, providing primary care to female inmates of the Folsom Women's Facility.

**Sarah Barnes-Halter, B.S.N. '08**, worked in the OR for five years and specialized in orthopedic joint replacement, spine, and ortho-trauma. She recently graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington's Pediatric Nurse Practitioner program in primary and acute care. She completed all of her acute hours in the children's ER in Plano, Texas, and has started working at the pediatrician's office in Frisco, Texas, where she did all of her primary care hours. Once she gets settled in practice, she plans to start a fitness and nutrition program for kids in the practice.

## 2010s

**Christopher A. Espinosa, B.S.N. '10, M.S.N. '13**, is a board-certified family nurse practitioner with the American Nurses Credentialing Center. He began his nursing career at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center's inpatient unit, where he discovered his passion for working with patients and families affected by cancer. After earning his master's degree, he began working for the UM Department of Neurology as an advanced registered nurse practitioner for the Neuro-Oncology Division. His primary focus is to help patients cope with their illness while prolonging their survival and prioritizing functional capabilities and quality of life for patients and caregivers.

**Adriana Arcia, Ph.D. '11**, has been appointed to the faculty of Columbia University School of Nursing with the title of assistant professor of nursing, effective August 1, 2014. She is also winner of the 2013 Harriet H. Werley Award for her article titled "Method for the Development of Data Visualizations for Community Members with Varying Levels of Health Literacy," presented yearly at the American Medical Informatics Association Annual Symposium to the paper with a nurse as first author that is judged to make the greatest contribution to advancing the field of nursing informatics.

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**Maya Chelsea Smith, B.S.N. '11**, began working at University of Miami Hospital on a med/surg/telemetry floor shortly after graduating. Within a year, she became the charge nurse on her floor with many other responsibilities. She won a Nurse of the Year award during Nurse's Week 2013 and was a DAISY award recipient last year as well. She is now back at UM, completing her M.S.N. to become a family nurse practitioner and expects to graduate this August 2014.

**Ada Jalice, B.S.H.S. '12**, is enrolled full-time at Nova Southeastern University's College of Pharmacy. With a lot of hard work and dedication, she has made it to the top 5 percent of her class each semester, was awarded the NSU College of Pharmacy Dean's Scholarship, and was invited to join the Delta Epsilon Iota Academic Honor Society. She is looking forward to her projected May 2016 graduation date and is thankful to have two great schools shaping her into a well-rounded and competent health care provider.

**Monica Roundtree-Cleckley, D.N.P. '13**, was offered the position of GI navigator/medical provider at the Miami Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Her duties will be divided between seeing clients in the center and overseeing the GI programs. She is now ready to employ the skills and knowledge she attained from the D.N.P. program at UM.

**Tony Perez, B.S.H.S. '12**, has been pursuing a Doctorate of Pharmacy at Nova Southeastern University since fall 2012. Last summer, he was accepted into a joint-degree program and is now also seeking a Master of Business Administration with a focus on pharmacy management. He is proud to hold two community pharmacy internships with CVS pharmacy and Target Pharmacy. He has been on the Chancellor's List (top 5 percent of his class) for all semesters and is an active member of the student chapter of the American Pharmacist's Association, in which he has served as treasurer. This

spring he will be marrying his fiancée, whom he met at the University of Miami.

**Rachael Liebman, B.S.N. '13**, is a psychiatric mental health registered nurse at Oregon State Hospital (the filming site of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*). She works on a forensic behavioral stabilization unit as the lead swing shift R.N. Her clients are criminal offenders who enter the hospital as .370 (not competent to stand trial) and PSRB (guilty with the exception of insanity). She works with an incredible team of mental health providers to assess and implement interventions aimed at promoting behavioral and physical health.

**Alyssa Mary Plisic, B.S.N. '13**, moved back home to New York, where she worked for three months at St. Francis Hospital, "The Heart Center," on a medical/surgical/telemetry floor. She recently was hired into the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at Cohen's Children's Medical Center of New York, her dream job.

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# Sprinting to Success

**Despite her multiple nursing degrees**, Carol Tuttas, Ph.D. '13, did not always take care of human patients. For years she cared for and trained racehorses near her hometown of Niagara on the Lake in southern Ontario, Canada. Then an accident on the track sent her to the hospital with multiple bone fractures. After being immobilized for months and suffering a hospital-acquired surgical wound infection, Tuttas decided it was time for a new career.

"I received the most excellent nursing care during my long hospitalization," she says, "and like most patients, I knew nothing about nursing, but I knew I was getting good-quality care."

In what she describes as "the best move I ever made," Tuttas became a nursing assistant and has since functioned as a nurse at every educational level. In her current role as director for enterprise services at the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools

(CGFNS International), she works to strengthen education and practice competence of health care professionals worldwide. Prior to earning her Ph.D., she was director for standards and certification at a health care staffing firm and a nurse manager, roles that exposed her to travel nurses. It was the American travel nurse population on which she focused her dissertation research.

Rosa Gonzalez-Guarda, Ph.D. '08, chair of Tuttas's dissertation committee, notes that the acquired knowledge and unique skills of travel nurses make them a

potential resource for alleviating the nursing shortage. "It speaks to Carol's intellect and ingenuity that she recognized the need for further analysis of this tremendously understudied group," Gonzalez-Guarda says.

To gather the data for her mixed methods study, Tuttas used online surveys and brought together travel nurses from across the U.S. for focus group discussions conducted entirely via Web conferencing. When she realized there was no literature on the use of Web conferencing for focus group data collection, she built the process herself and has since written a paper, soon to be published, to guide other researchers on this format.

Tuttas, whom Gonzalez-Guarda calls "the quintessential yes person," serves as a guest expert on *Nursing Success TV*, coaching aspiring nurses via YouTube videos on ways to advance in the profession. She encourages them to be "mobile, available, and willing to take chances to land your dream job." She also stresses the value of an advanced education, saying, "Doors opened for me with every degree earned."

At CGFNS, Tuttas is working on a project using qualitative research methods. She is grateful to her Ph.D. experience for enabling her to "really understand the methodology and how to create the projects our clients commission us to produce for them." She envisions herself one day integrating the lessons learned from her CGFNS experience into her love of teaching. While she was a Ph.D. candidate Tuttas taught clinical nursing to first-year nursing students and says, "While I am proud of all my accomplishments, my real trophies are the students, many of whom I still hear from regularly, who are out there contributing to the field in part as a result of my mentorship.

"To those just beginning a nursing career," she adds, "I would repeat what my riding instructor said emphatically to me during the years I was learning to ride and care for horses: 'Keep your head up and focus on where you want to go.' That's what I've done, and I couldn't be happier."



ROBERT KLEMM

## Mastering Language, Learning, and Life in a New Country

As this issue of *Heartbeat* magazine was going to press, Marialina Bravo, B.S.N. '14, held the highest grade point average among all traditional-track graduating seniors in the School of Nursing and Health Studies. While this is quite an achievement for any student, it's nothing short of spectacular for Bravo, who spoke barely a word of English when she arrived in the United States only six years ago from her native Santiago de Cuba. While several people advised her to consider a technical, non-degree-seeking career path, Bravo came to this country with her father, her brother, and a dream: To complete her formal health care education and become first in her family to earn a college degree.

"To keep from becoming overwhelmed, I broke my vision down into smaller, manageable goals," says Bravo, who attained an associate's degree while considering where to pursue her B.S.N. On the advice of a fellow immigrant who earned his college degree in the U.S., Bravo applied to the University of Miami because, "I wanted the best

return on my investment in my own education and in my future."

A Lettie Pate Whitehead Foundation scholarship helped to defray tuition costs at UM while Bravo was still mastering the English language and adjusting to a brand-new educational culture and new way of thinking about health and health care. "Nursing is not pure science; it also involves an incredible amount of critical thinking," she says. "You have to be more than book smart to succeed in this program."

Bravo also personifies excellence outside the classroom. Assistant Professor of Clinical Carole Wilkinson,

D.N.P. '10, who supervised Bravo's clinical experience at Ryder Trauma Center and Jackson Memorial Hospital Cardiac Emergency Room, notes Bravo's professionalism in her interactions with patients, families, and registered nurses. Wilkinson recalls a day when Bravo experienced a patient crisis.

"When I learned of it," Wilkinson says, "I asked her why she had not called me for help. She responded, 'This is what nursing is, isn't it? These issues will come up again, and I need to learn to deal with them on my own.' That is an amazing reply from a student."

With nursing degree in hand, Bravo is taking a systematic approach to deciding her next career step. "I want to apply the valuable knowledge I have acquired at the School of Nursing and Health Studies to the real world of nursing with an open mind before deciding on a specialization," she says.

Her immediate personal goal is to bring her mom and younger sister from Cuba to live with her in Miami. "I want them to be proud of me and see the value of higher education."







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