LEAVE YOUR MARK AND TAKE A SEAT!

Join us in the new state-of-the-art auditorium in the forthcoming University of Miami Simulation Hospital at the School of Nursing and Health Studies.

The TAKE A SEAT campaign offers a unique opportunity to play a vital role in the future of health care education. A gift of $250 or $500 will allow donors to name a seat in the auditorium in honor of their time and accomplishments at the School, as a tribute to a family member, or as a commemoration of a special memory. The nameplate, mounted on the back of a seat, will be installed upon completion of the project in 2017.

Only 300 seats are available, and we expect them to go quickly.

To make a gift online, visit www.miami.edu/sonhs-takeaseat or call the Advancement Office at 305-284-5435.
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.

Building the Future of Health Care

It is a transformative time at the SONHS! The hustle and bustle that typifies any busy academic program is being amplified by the sounds and sights of construction on our school grounds, as the long-anticipated Simulation Hospital becomes a reality. Witnessing the creation of our new facility makes me more aware than ever of how far our school has come. I am pleased to inform you that U.S. News & World Report’s 2017 Best Graduate Schools issue named the SONHS’s graduate programs among the nation’s top 50, with the Master of Science in Nursing program vaulting to No. 38 out of 149 schools. In U.S. News & World Report’s 2017 Best Graduate Schools issue named the SONHS’s graduate programs among the nation’s top 50, with the Master of Science in Nursing program vaulting to No. 38 out of 149 schools. In

Science in Nursing program vaulting to No. 40 and the Doctor of Nursing Practice program, a new category, ranking No. 38 out of 149 schools. In this issue of Heartbeat you will see why our programs continue to rise in the rankings. It is the dedication, talent, and generosity of our students, alumni, faculty, community partners, and friends that facilitate this progress. The stories in this issue illustrate our overarching excellence, beginning with the cover story on how a high-tech, game-based intervention created by one of our gifted faculty scientists is empowering young girls and revolutionizing the field of teen pregnancy prevention. Featured student, alumni, and faculty profiles describe how health care professionals who are educated in our programs are contributing in creative, intelligent, and lasting ways to improve the health of our country’s most vulnerable populations.

Beyond national borders, you will learn how our school is leading an exciting partnership with Guyana’s Ministry of Health and the Pan American Health Organization to strengthen nursing education capacity in the Caribbean.

“Today I am pleased to inform you that U.S. News & World Report’s 2017 Best Graduate Schools issue named the SONHS’s graduate programs among the nation’s top 50.”
President Frenk Unveils Roadmap for the U in Inaugural Address

The University of Miami inaugurated Julio Frenk as its sixth president on January 29—a monumental occasion in the University’s 91-year history and the cornerstone of a weeklong series of celebratory events.

Men’s and women’s basketball games, national inauguration watch parties, and Fireworks at UM (an exhibit and discussion of pivotal moments at the U) were all part of Inauguration Week 2016. The week also included the launch of “Cane Talks”—live, ten-minute presentations by leading UM thinkers available online at canetalks.miami.edu.

President Frenk, former dean of Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health and minister of health in Mexico, delivered an energetic and inspiring inaugural address, “Charting the Course to Our New Century.” In it, he shared his vision for the U to become “a truly hemispheric, excellent, relevant, and exemplary university.

To achieve this vision by the University’s centennial in 2025, Frenk outlined several initiatives: 100 new endowed faculty chairs, funding to meet the University’s centennial in 2025, Frenk and exemplary university.”

The goal was to help reduce the spread of infectious diseases by connecting every home in the impoverished community to the town’s central sewage system.

Assessing the Impact of Community Health Fairs

When School of Nursing and Health Studies faculty member Jessica Williams was tapped to teach Population Focused Nursing, a requirement of the B.S.N. curriculum, she embraced the long-standing practice of community health fairs as a part of this course.

She designed a study to measure the impact of health fairs on participants’ knowledge, skills, and behaviors, and on the level of community engagement with the school. As a dedicated researcher who helps lead the community engagement activities of the Center of Excellence for Health Disparities Research: El Centro, Williams enlisted help from El Centro faculty and nursing students to create a toolkit that would standardize the planning, execution, and evaluation of the health fairs.

“Almost no evaluations have been conducted to determine the long-term effectiveness of health fairs,” says Williams. “The study follows up with participants to see if they made behavioral changes or can still perform the skills they learned after a certain amount of time has elapsed.”

Williams is now pilot-testing a community-based organization engagement tool developed by Ph.D. student Winnie Adebayo to evaluate and help improve the school’s relationships with its community partners.

“This project is the perfect confluence of nursing education, research, and service,” says Williams. “Blending the health fairs with the research and service mission of El Centro shows our students that nursing scholarship, nursing science, and service to the profession are not discrete elements, but rather can be combined to maximize the wellbeing of community residents and support the work of our community partner health care providers.”
From Curing to Comforting: Improving End of Life Education

Given the reality of a rapidly aging U.S. population, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) has called for incorporation of End of Life (EOL) education throughout the nursing curriculum. To meet this mandate, Assistant Professor LaToya Lewis-Pierre, B.S.N. ’02, in collaboration with fellow School of Nursing and Health Studies faculty Mary Mckay, B.S.N. ’08, D.N.P. ’10, and Jill Sanko, Ph.D. ’15, and sociology faculty Landsi Belgrave, worked with an instructional designer to develop and test an innovative, engaging, and interactive EOL online learning module and EOL simulation activity.

“There is a need for compassionate EOL nursing care,” says Lewis-Pierre. “Nurses must be prepared to deliver all aspects of care—not only maintaining or restoring patient health but also helping patients and their families to experience dying in a humane manner.”

While the SONHS curriculum has always included some EOL care components such as managing symptoms of impending death, this initiative focused on how to interact with dying patients and family members to facilitate a peaceful and comfortable death. “We’re teaching students how to make the psychological switch from curing to caring for a dying patient, which can make students feel helpless and uncomfortable,” says Lewis-Pierre. “They have to turn off the voice that tells them a nurse should promote wellness and save lives. Rather, the goal of compassionate EOL care is to provide comfort.”

The study intervention group completed an online EOL educational module and then participated in an EOL simulation scenario, while the control group completed the online module only.

Teams of three students participated in each simulation scenario. Two of the students cared for a dying patient, while the third student played the role of a family member, helping them learn about and respond to concerns that a dying patient’s family might have.

The simulation scenarios closely mirrored real-world EOL situations with adult patients, with the simulators displaying EOL symptoms. An interprofessional approach to EOL care was emphasized: students responded to orders from physicians and other providers, and were encouraged to access resources such as pastoral care and psychosocial services. The students learned to work in teams to deliver patient- and family-centered, culturally appropriate care.

“It was gratifying that the students reported feeling compassion and care for the dying patients and their families, even when they were also experiencing discomfort because they weren’t sure which clinical skills to employ,” says Lewis-Pierre. “Just realizing how much they wanted to help and to learn was so rewarding for me.”

Both the online module and simulation experiences demonstrated positive positioning of the role and value of nurses as advocates and caregivers. Students reported stronger understanding of the role and value of nurses as advocates as well as caregivers,” says Lewis-Pierre. “They learned that nurses not only support patients in getting well but also support them in the transition from living to dying.”

Both the EOL online module and simulation experience have been permanently incorporated into the Adult Health II curriculum at the SONHS.

SONHS Students Named to All-ACC Academic Team

Gracie Lachowecki, soccer player and nursing major, and Justin Vogel, football player and health science major, were among the SONHS athletes selected to the All-ACC Academic Teams in their respective sports in February 2016. Lachowecki was also the lone player in the conference to win back-to-back ACC Offensive Player of the Week last season. Eligibility requirements are a 3.0 grade point average for the prior semester and 3.0 cumulative GPA.

At the heart of El Centro’s model is “training cor caritatis.” The Spanish word caritatis means paying attention when students are having a hard time, and reaching out and offering support. “You have to provide mentorship with affection, caring, and warmth,” explains Mitrani. “Minority students and early career scientists face many obstacles to achievement in the sciences and can easily become discouraged. Many of us are minority scholars ourselves, and we know what it’s like.”

The SAB heard El Centro success stories from student Ariel Smith, a Minority Health International Research Scholar who was accepted to the SONHS B.S.N. to Ph.D. program; Jacob Martinez, a Ph.D. student who will conduct his dissertation research at the University of Texas at El Paso; and postdoctoral associate and medical anthropologist June Carrington, who is looking at how culture affects access to care among women in Miami and Puerto Rico.
Researching Minority Organ Donor Designation in South Florida

Every organ donor can save up to eight lives, yet an average of 22 people die nationwide every day waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant.

Organ match compatibility is more likely among those from the same ethnicity or race, putting some minority populations at risk due to religious or cultural concerns, explains Christina Karapelou, D.N.P. ’15, who has years of advanced nursing experience in the organ transplant arena. While reviewing statistics for South Florida between people needing transplants and those getting them, she noticed a wide disparity among Haitian-Americans. “Nationally, minorities donate in proportion to their population,” she explains. “But in South Florida, Black Americans comprise 45 percent of the organ transplant waitlist while only 27 percent donated in 2014,” she reveals.

Identifying this as a major health care issue, Karapelou made it the focus of her D.N.P. capstone project, “A Bimodal Approach to Increasing Organ Donation Designation: A Minority Nursing Organization and Legislative Awareness.” It successfully leveraged a minority association partnership and a health policy to build awareness on how to improve organ donor designation in South Florida.

“South Florida is a very unique environment regarding transplants because amongst certain minority groups, the community, various ethnic and religious beliefs exist that go into making a decision for someone to donate their organs or accept a transplant,” says Karapelou. “Combatting myths, distrust, or religious objections about donations and transplantation is culturally sensitive, so the right type of education and awareness-building is critical to increase designation.”

Karapelou’s “Train-the-Trainer” (TTT) phase of her project aimed to build such awareness within the Haitian-American community by partnering with the Haitian-American Nurses Association (HANA). Evidence shows that members from ethnic communities connect better with those from their own race and ethnic origins when discussing health care. Using the TTT model to train HANA member nurses about organ donation, Karapelou empowered them to educate 23 Haitian-American community members. As a result, the aggregate knowledge gained and shared may lead to 184 potential saved lives, if the newly aware now register to donate.

“Using a nursing organization versus going into the community and doing my own education was pivotal to the success of my project,” reveals Karapelou. “It showcases the exponential power of a community network.”

Mary Etienne, D.N.P. ’10, chair of HANA’s Public Relations and Legislative Affairs Committee and a Miami Dade College nursing professor, says, “Working with Christina was a perfect fit for the HANA in addressing the need to increase awareness regarding organ donation in the Haitian-American community of South Florida.”

As part of her pilot, Karapelou also presented on legislative awareness to the Florida Nurses Association (FNA) and worked with Florida state representatives to help draft pending legislation on organ donor registration.

“People are dying while they’re waiting. And Christina took that on from the perspective of really delving into the evidence and then working with the legislators and appropriate nursing associations,” says Mary Hoedemann, Ph.D. ’10, assistant professor of clinical nursing at SONHS and Karapelou’s advisor.

Karapelou now has a new position in the Department of Nephrology and Hypertension at the Miami Transplant Institute (MTI). Her pilot has been internationally acknowledged through invitations to speak to the HANA affiliated nursing schools in Haiti.

El Centro Co-Hosts Child Welfare Conference

Each year domestic violence, mental disorders, and substance abuse take a significant toll on the welfare of children. Last winter, the school’s Center of Excellence for Health Disparities Research: El Centro co-hosted the 9th Annual Miami-Dade Community Based Care Alliance Child Welfare Conference. The conference theme was “Improving Frontline Practice through Therapeutic Jurisprudence.”

Faculty members Rosa Gonzalez-Guarda, Ph.D. ’08, and Anthony Roberson helped plan and present at the event, held on the Coral Gables campus. About 280 child welfare professionals attended, including judges, case managers, attorneys, court staff, administrators, volunteers, advocates, and mental health professionals. Participants received training on how to implement a therapeutic approach in the court system that considers not only the prescribed legal route but also the science-based impact that their decisions may have on the therapeutic process and, consequently, on the mental and physical well-being of children involved in the system.

Innovation in Education Conference Builds on Last Year’s Tech Fair

What began last year as a technology fair at the School of Nursing and Health Studies grew into a full-day technology conference this year, offering continuing education credits for nurses and attracting numerous participants from throughout the University and South Florida community.

The conference—Technological Innovation in Health Care Education: Collaborations for Empowerment and Learning—took place on January 23, 2016 at the Schwartz Center for Nursing and Health Studies. Allan Gyorke, assistant vice president for information technology and chief academic technology officer at the University of Miami, delivered a keynote session covering the gamut of teaching tech, including wearable technology, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and 3D printing. Breakouts and hands-on technology demonstrations followed.

Participants included nurses and instructional design professionals from Jackson Memorial Hospital, University of Miami Hospital, The Cleveland Clinic, and Nova Southeastern University, as well as UM’s Miller School of Medicine, School of Education and Human Development, and Department of Information Technology. Opening the event to those outside of the school helped “to encourage inter-institutional connectedness and communication, as well as community partnerships, as strategies to promote digital tools,” explains SONHS Assistant Professor of Clinical Carmen Presti, D.N.P. ’12, who organized the conference with Khitam Azaiza, director of instructional design and media production at the school. “This is important because effective teaching strategies promote critical thinking in students.”

The topic that generated the most excitement, according to Azaiza and Presti, was the “flipped classroom,” in which online didactic instruction helps free up classroom time for interactive learning. “At the conference we showed faculty that they do not have to transform their entire teaching modality all at once,” Azaiza says. “For example, if students are struggling with a particular lesson, faculty can implement the flipped classroom format for just that lesson to see if it helps. They can customize these cutting-edge tools as needed to enhance our students’ learning experiences.”

Roberson, who has conducted extensive research into the intersection of therapeutic jurisprudence and mental health among youth, said one of the overriding goals of the conference was to “facilitate a dialogue among the various disciplines about the complexities we all face in treating this vulnerable and oftentimes ignored population.”
It’s a breezy afternoon at Miami Lakes Middle School, and Mighty Girls program facilitator Dina Ferranti greets 15 Latina seventh-graders who are entering the classroom. The girls talk excitedly as they line their backpacks against the wall, cell phones safely tucked inside. They take their seats and look expectantly at Ferranti. “It’s time for our NO thanks, NO way Mighty Moment,” she announces.

During the next 45 minutes, the 11- to 13-year-olds learn about three different styles of communication—aggressive, passive, and assertive—and how they can refuse their friends’ requests to engage in risky behaviors by using their words, their voice, and their body language. “Communication is more than the words you say,” Ferranti tells them. “You’re also ‘talking’ with your body and the sound of your voice.”

The girls learn that when their words, voice, and body language match, others will see them as being confident and convincing. “Voice and Body-language Always Match,” emphasizes Ferranti, who is a School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) Ph.D. student. “That’s V-BAM power!”

Interactive classroom and digital games empower girls to use their voices to make wise choices.
The girls break into pairs and take turns practicing the “strategies for refusal” they are learning in the group. One girl tries to talk the other into engaging in the kind of risky behaviors that many early adolescent girls face every day, such as skipping class, shoplifting, hanging out with older teens, or sneaking beer from the refrigerator at home. The other girl uses her “V-BAM power,” together with “POW,” the Power of Words, to refuse the request in a way that’s convincing, considerate, and confident. She practices putting her shoulders back, looking her partner in the eye, and saying no without talking in a “squeaky” voice or sounding like she’s asking a question. As she learns how to choose words that will protect her friendship while getting her safely out of the risky proposition.

A week later, the girls are back. This time their eyes are on Christina Lopez, B.S.P.H., ’15, who is sending them to the game room to play DRAMA-RAMA, the Mighty Girls skill-building videogame. After 15 minutes, they return with big smiles on their faces and giggle while comparing stories, especially stories about “Javier.” Girls need to use a lot of POW and V-BAM with Javier—he likes to flirt and invite them to do things like come over to his house when his parents are not there.

The girls are participants in Mighty Girls, an early intervention pregnancy prevention program for Hispanic and Brazilian girls and the brainchild of University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies Professor Anne Norris. Mighty Girls is currently being implemented in Miami-Dade County middle schools as part of the JUEGA! study (see sidebar). The program combines highly interactive classroom sessions with DRAMA-RAMA, a cutting-edge video game that uses avatar-based, mixed-reality technology to empower early adolescent girls with skills to resist everyday peer pressure and remove themselves from risky situations. SONHS undergraduate and graduate students team together with School of Education and Human Development graduate students to help Norris deliver and evaluate the program.

RESISTING RISK WITHOUT LOSING FACE

“Early adolescents are at risk for engaging in behaviors linked to early initiation of intercourse, such as hanging out with older teens who are engaging in sexual behaviors,” explains Norris. “Girls who initiate intercourse early are at risk for teen pregnancy, especially pregnancies that end up with a baby in the NICU [Neonatal Intensive Care Unit]. The costs to the adolescent, family, health care system, and society are high—but preventable.”

National statistics show an increased risk for teen pregnancy among Hispanics living in low socioeconomic neighborhoods, such as the ones targeted by Norris’s study. Data from a Mighty Girls feasibility trial indicates that the program has a more powerful impact on reducing risky sexual behavior than other early intervention prevention programs. These promising early results led the National Institute of Nursing Research of the National Institutes of Health to award Norris a $3.3 million, five-year grant in 2014 to further test the efficacy of Mighty Girls.

“Early adolescents need information presented in a concrete, rule-based manner that at the same time enables them to think about the effects of their choice and to resist social influences without losing face with their friends,” says Norris. “Mighty Girls was designed to do all of these things.” Through activities such as rating the likelihood of various behavior choices or critiquing the messages embedded in media images and television programs, the girls also develop critical thinking skills.

The classroom sessions teach decision-making by scaffolding formal operations thinking through fun, game-like activities that link goals, choices, and results of choices,” says Norris. Through Mighty Moments and other fun, interactive activities Norris developed in collaboration with Roxana Delcampo Thalasinos (research support coordinator for JUEGA!), “the girls develop a kinesthetic or whole body approach to learning and health care system, and society are high—but preventable.”

The Mighty Girls condition has six classroom sessions in which girls learn to link choices and consequences, identify risky behaviors and situations, match their words with their tone of voice and body language, use avoidance and refusal techniques to respond to peers, and critique sexualized messages in the media.

After completing the classroom sessions, girls play DRAMA-RAMA, a computer game that allows them to practice their newly acquired skills verbally and nonverbally with several “early adolescent” avatars. The girls’ words, voices and body language are the “inputs” to which the avatars respond. They earn game points for socially competent and effective responses to simulated interpersonal encounters that are drawn from the kinds of situations that middle school girls typically encounter in their schools and neighborhoods.

The Game Girls condition features Science Valley, an interactive, virtual reality computer game designed by UCF’s E2i Creative Studio to help increase girls’ interest in science and create an opportunity for them to practice using the scientific method as they interact with male and female scientist avatars and a friendly robot dog in a virtual world. Girls are able to experiment with building a wind turbine or a robot, or with determining the environmental conditions needed to grow a crop. The Game Girls condition helps the study team ensure that changes in the Mighty Girls participants are due to the intervention and not to girls maturing or changing their behavior over the short term simply by virtue of being part of a research study (i.e., “the Hawthorne Effect”).

“I think we’re going to see some really groundbreaking and innovative results,” says Anne Norris, principal investigator of this study and a professor in the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies. “The Mighty Girls intervention, the DRAMA-RAMA game, and the way we’re going to analyze the data are all cutting edge,” Norris says.
awareness of assertive communication,” Norris explains.

“You can see them grow from one session to another,” notes Ferranti. “They begin to think of their own new ways to say no or to avoid giving an answer altogether.”

The project is an interdisciplinary, collaborative effort that brings together experts in communication, psychology, theatre, and technology. “When you bring people from different fields together, you get multiple areas of expertise and different perspectives on a problem that enriches the solution-finding process,” explains Norris.

Jeff Temple, an associate professor and psychologist at the University of Texas, is bringing his expertise on dating violence prevention researcher who serves as the University, is a communications scientist in this program. “Greater self-confidence in making wise choices. One of the most innovative aspects of the gaming technology is the use of digital puppetry which allows the girls to talk directly to the avatars as if they were real people, fully immersing them in a virtual world that simulates their everyday experiences. Each story unfolds differently as the characters respond to each girl’s own words, tone of voice, and body language. The players earn points by using their Mighty Girl “powers” — V-BAM and POW — to respond to the risky scenarios.

“This is the model of the future,” says Temple. “Technology isn’t going away, and we can use it to our advantage to promote healthy behaviors in teens.”

Eileen Smith, director of the E2i Creative Studio at the University of Central Florida Institute for Simulation and Training, collaborated with Norris in the production of DRAMA-RAMA. Together with project manager and designer Alexia Mandeville, they helped create the look of the fun, cartoonlike characters and the virtual world in which they live. Actors with expertise in interactive performance helped Norris create the game stories and provided the physical poses and facial expressions for each of the characters.

“Emerging media research is about creative innovation, transcending the limitations of current technology, and getting to the next level,” says Smith. “We’re finding new ways to use creative technology for learner engagement.”

Another innovation is the use of the players’ voices and body language — instead of a mouse, joystick, or keyboard — as the “input” for the game. “They need to learn how to respond to the way they would in a real-life situation — by using their voices and body language,” explains Smith.

Using gaming technology to advance prevention science is an approach that greatly interests the NIH. “The technology behind DRAMA-RAMA helps us capture the girls’ decisions so we can learn more about female empowerment,” says Smith. “The technology guides the experience, but the girls drive the experience.”

TAKING NEW SKILLS INTO THE REAL WORLD

There is great enthusiasm for the project among the girls as well as their parents. “The girls are super positive about the game. They say, ‘This is so fun, I wish I could take it home with me,’” says Ferranti. “And the parents say their daughters have changed in a positive way after being in the program,” adds study assistant Jennifer Donoso, who helps coordinate the DRAMA-RAMA sessions.

The schools are just as enthusiastic. Marily Hernandez is at specialist and school counselor at Miami Lakes Middle School, one of the schools participating in the Mighty Girls program. “The girls who are engaged seem more empowered, and the parents are happy with the program,” she says. “I’ve noticed girls using their skills in my individual and family meetings. It’s exciting. We want to start offering this program to all the girls in our school every year.”

Clearly, Norris’ vision and leadership are at the heart of the program’s success. “Projects like this come down to someone like her making it happen,” says Hecht. “She’s a gifted researcher who has the ability to move effectively within interdisciplinary groups and to connect to the schools and teachers and parents and computer programmers.”

In the end, the girls are taking their new awareness and skills into the very real, everyday world of middle school. After a Mighty Girls session last fall, Natacha Janac, one of Norris’ program facilitators and a master’s student in the UM School of Education and Human Development, was outside the school with one of her students when both noticed a girl trying to tell a boy to stop bothering her. The young “mighty girl” sized up the situation right away: “She’s saying no, but her body language doesn’t match,” she observed. “That girl really needs to learn how to say no!”
A unique partnership with Ryder Trauma Center exposes School of Nursing and Health Studies students to world-class clinical practice skills.

By Ginny Pickles

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME an educator heard a student happily exclaim, “It’s blowing my mind!” when describing a required component of a challenging curriculum? If the student is enrolled in the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner (AGACNP) program, and she is describing her clinical practice experience at Ryder Trauma Center at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, then the answer is: just this spring.
Caring for the Most Critical Patients

In addition to providing comprehensive care to Level 1 trauma patients, Ryder is the go-to healthcare destination for the country’s most critical and complex medical cases. “Graduate students have the opportunity to care for a variety of acutely ill and injured patients in a clinically advanced setting under the guidance of nurse practitioner preceptors, who are leaders in the profession and the community,” says Assistant Professor of Clinical Nichole Crenshaw, D.N.P. ’14, who is director of Adult-Gerontology Acute and Primary Care Nurse Practitioner programs at the SONHS. “Even nurses with ICU and emergency department backgrounds may not have been exposed to victims of assault, gunshot wounds, or stab wounds, or people who were involved in serious motor vehicle crashes. Their injuries are quite different from what is typically seen in a hospital ICU, where patients may be recovering from surgery or have a serious illness that is deteriorating. Managing Level 1 trauma patients in this progressive environment is a completely new experience for our students.”

Ryder also offers a unique educational experience beyond the clinic, tapping into the students’ critical thinking skills. Six students per semester are paired one-to-one with acute care nurse practitioners who guide them and serve as mentors. These 12 individuals compose a team that meets twice per semester with Hernandez, Ortega, and Crenshaw to collaborate on a quality improvement project. Not only are the students earning required clinical hours, they are also becoming invested in Ryder, working toward a common purpose: to improve patient care. People are the most valuable resource for students at Ryder, particularly the clinical mentors who are paired with the graduate students. “These students are the next generation of nurse practitioners, and their preceptors have an important role in shaping their knowledge base, not only how to manage patients but also how to drive the profession forward,” Crenshaw says. “In addition to being excellent clinicians, the preceptors are experts and leaders in their field. They are active in professional organizations, they contribute to the literature, and they regularly attend and present at national conferences.”

A clinical practice experience at Ryder also benefits students by exposing them to an advanced level of specialized care. Ryder is a pioneer in various areas of medicine, employing bedside robotics in the ICU, for example, and conducting cutting-edge research at the William Lehman Injury Research Center. In fact, surgical and medical teams from the United States, Florida, and the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia visit the center to study the latest techniques in advanced trauma care.

In addition, Ryder houses the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Burn Center, one of the country’s leading burn treatment facilities and the only American Burn Association-certified center in South Florida. Students experience care of a variety of patients in a fast-paced environment, she says. “We saw new things that we would never have seen on a medical-surgical floor.” Rosen was also impressed with the value of an advanced degree. "It isn’t just graduate-level nursing students who are expanding their clinical knowledge at Ryder Trauma Center. Undergraduate students seeking their Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.S.N.) degrees are also reaping the benefits of this exceptional partnership. Although they approach the experience from a different level of education and training than the graduate students do, their enthusiasm is comparable. "Working at Ryder Trauma Center was the absolute most amazing experience I have ever had!” says new grad Avischay "Vivi" Simons, B.S.N. ’16. “I gained valuable knowledge and skills from the talented staff while caring for patients with a multitude of complex injuries. I observed lifesaving measures in the trauma resuscitation area and then cared for those patients in the ICU. Not only did I learn important clinical skills, but I also learned the importance of therapeutic communication and cultural competency. The experience has strengthened my passion for nursing.”

Rachel Rosen, who also graduated with her B.S.N. in spring 2016, was assigned to the Jackson Memorial Burn Center at Ryder. "An advantage of working at Ryder is that we are taking care of a variety of patients in a fast-paced environment,” she says. “We saw new things that we would never have seen on a medical-surgical floor.” Rosen was also impressed with the level of collaboration among the healthcare professionals at Ryder.

Benefiting Bachelor’s Students Too

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Liliana Montoya, B.S.N. ’16, found that the timing of her clinical practice experience at Ryder was particularly beneficial. “We had just completed our critical care class, and at Ryder we saw multiple textbook cases of critical patients play out before our very eyes,” she says. “Most importantly, the nursing interventions were often the same protocols that we had learned in class. We had the advantage of learning from lectures and reading, and then by experience, which research has shown is the most effective way for students to learn.”

One of the assignments for NUR 411 (Adult Health), a required course for the B.S.N. degree, is for students to present a clinical case review, usually to their instructors or to each other. Last semester, however, clinical instructor Luis DeRosa Jr., arranged for the students to present their cases to a high-level audience that included Ryder Trauma Center clinical staff as well as members of the U.S. Army Forward Surgical Team, which was receiving specialized trauma training at Ryder prior to deployment to Syria.

“Initially, the students were nervous about presenting to such a sophisticated audience,” says DeRosa. "It’s a Level 1 trauma nurse, but their delivery of accurate, evidence-based information that meets best nursing practice standards was spot-on and well received. The Army medics, as well as the Ryder Trauma staff, told me afterwards that they gained enhanced knowledge from our students’ presentations.”

They made the School of Nursing and Health Studies shine.”
The Simulation Hospital groundbreaking is a historic step forward in the vision to revolutionize health care education

Toward a Simulation Destination

ON NOVEMBER 12, 2015, more than 200 School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) alumni, donors, students, faculty, and friends gathered in the courtyard of the Schwartz Center for Nursing and Health Studies to celebrate the groundbreaking of a new Simulation Hospital, the largest endeavor in the school’s 67-year history. Slated to open in 2017, the five-story, 41,000-square-foot Simulation Hospital will be one of the nation’s first education-based destination centers for simulation immersion.

“The hospital will be a unique resource to train those who share our passion for caring for others, as we all know that simulation saves lives,” said guest speaker Pamela J. Garrison, co-chair of the Simulation Hospital fundraising campaign and a retired nurse who spearheaded a $1 million matching gift program with her late partner, R. Kirk Landon.

Susana Barroso, director of operations for the school’s International Academy for Clinical Simulation and Research, presented a virtual tour of the hospital’s rooms, suites, and units where students, nurses, physicians, and other health care professionals will work in teams to “treat” standardized patients and high-fidelity simulators while learning skills to prevent medical errors. An emergency department, operating suite, intensive care unit, and women and children’s wing with neonatal and pediatric intensive care units will be outfitted with medical equipment identical to what is used in the world’s most advanced health care settings. An on-site patient apartment will be the setting for home health, hospice, and end-of-life care scenarios.

The entire fifth floor of the hospital will be occupied by The Helene Fuld Skills Resource Center, where students and professionals can practice techniques and procedures until they master them.

Additional naming opportunities include the entire Simulation Hospital for $8 million, as well as other spaces that start at $25,000. The SONHS has also introduced a Take a Seat campaign, which allows donors who contribute $250 or $500 to name a seat in the Simulation Hospital Auditorium in honor of their accomplishments at the school or as a tribute to a family member or special memory.

Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano noted that in addition to dramatically increasing its current simulation experiences for students, the Simulation Hospital will greatly enhance the school’s outreach and service to the professional health care community. It will offer simulation courses and needs assessment services for health care professionals and serve as a beta testing site for medical devices and equipment. This hospital will greatly expand the capabilities of the school’s International Academy for Clinical Simulation, which this year received provisional accreditation from the Society for Simulation in Healthcare. The simulation program is one of only three in the state of Florida to receive this recognition.

UM President Julio Frenk, a physician and former minister of health in Mexico, stressed the important role the Simulation Hospital will play in engaging student nurses and doctors in critical interprofessional communication.

“This will be a great way to bring together our two health sciences schools—the Miller School of Medicine and the School of Nursing and Health Studies,” Frenk said. “Something I’ve heard from both ends of the Metrorail is that this will shorten the distance between our two campuses. Having this state-of-the-art facility will be a key to advancing our global mission in health education.”
When Hilary Christopher was growing up in Guyana, a country on South America’s North Atlantic coast, he was fascinated by anatomy and physiology. These studies led to his passion for learning about how the body works. “I especially wanted to understand the body’s healing abilities,” says Christopher. “I wanted to see a complete microscopic healing process, start to finish, with my own eyes.”

Encouraged to pursue a career in health care by his mother and sister, he enrolled in nursing school and became involved in health-related activities at youth clubs and church groups while still a student. “I’m always excited to share my knowledge of the human body,” he says.

Now a registered nurse midwife and a member of the health science faculty at the Charles Roza School of Nursing in Linden, Guyana, Christopher set a demanding new goal for himself – “to master the classroom arts and skills of teaching.”

The timing couldn’t have been better. In 2015, Christopher became one of 26 nurse faculty chosen by Guyana’s Ministry of Health to participate in a new UM School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) faculty-led project to build capacity among Guyana’s nurse educators.

SUSTAINABILITY IS GOAL OF PARTNERSHIP

The Certificate in Nursing Education initiative is a partnership between the SONHS’s Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)/World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre, Guyana’s Ministry of Health, the PAHO regional office in Guyana, and PAHO headquarters in Washington, D.C. “This new generation of Guyana’s nursing workforce will be prepared to deliver high-quality, safe, and competent care,” says SONHS associate professor of clinical and associate dean for nursing undergraduate programs Mary Mckay, B.S.N. ’88, D.N.P. ’10.

“In this way, they’ll contribute to the universal health access mission of the PAHO/WHO.”

“PAHO clearly has a stake in nursing education and is willing to make available the best technical resources to help Guyana,” adds Wilton Benn, director of health sciences education for Guyana’s Ministry of Public Health. “The SONHS certificate course is an example of that commitment. Through this partnership, the SONHS/PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre is providing the nurturing and mentorship we need at this stage of our nursing education development.”

The course participants were all teaching faculty handpicked to represent Guyana’s four schools of nursing, and included experienced as well as early-career teachers. By learning best practices for instructing—and building their capacity to train other faculty members—these participants are now the bedrock of sustainable improvements to Guyana’s nursing education infrastructure. It’s a systemic approach that will ultimately translate to improvements in patient care, as research on staffing in U.S. hospitals demonstrates that higher educational levels in nurses lead to better patient outcomes.

“These young nurses will have to sustain the efforts down the road as the older ones retire,” Benn explains. “To have a sustainable system, we need young people who are equipped to become tomorrow’s leaders.”

GUYANA DELEGATION OBSERVES SONHS IN ACTION

In preparation for the launch of the nursing education certificate course, in October 2015, the SONHS’s PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre welcomed a delegation from Guyana that included the directors of its four nursing schools and representatives from Guyana’s Ministry of Health. Another delegation of six senior faculty members from Guyana’s schools of nursing visited in December. The visiting faculty met with Mckay and assistant professor of clinical Deborah Salani, B.S.N. ’86, M.S.N. ’89, D.N.P. ’13, who co-taught the certificate course, as well as with SONHS’s dean and director of its Collaborating Centre, Nilda (Nena) Paragallo Montano.

The faculty delegation toured the SONHS’ International Academy for Clinical Simulation and Research and observed live simulation education and debriefing sessions. They also conducted observational visits to SONHS community partner hospitals, where they observed clinical instruction in action.

“We gave them the opportunity to observe nursing educational strategies used by SONHS clinical faculty to bridge didactic and clinical content,” says Salani. “We emphasized the connection between clinical instruction and classroom learning,” adds Mckay.

Students at New Amsterdam School of Nursing and Charles Roza School of Nursing in Guyana.
We explained that nursing students learn theories in class, but it doesn’t become real to them until they can integrate theory into practice in the clinical environment.

The faculty visit yielded benefits right away. “The clinical instructors were able to see what a more resource-rich setting looks like,” says Benn. “But it also helped them say ‘we’re not here yet, but here are some things we can learn from’ and ‘here are some best practices that are immediately applicable’ in the global setting.”

According to Benn, during a stop at the University of Miami Hospital, the visitors learned how to conduct a debriefing session following hands-on clinical instruction to identify what went well and areas for improvement. They implemented this practice as soon as they returned to Guyana.

The visit by the delegation of nursing school directors and Ministry of Health officials was also fruitful. “It helped us validate our vision, identify standards to guide our schools, and determine how we can apply best practices to our current realities,” says Benn, who represented the Ministry of Health in that delegation.

“The bonding between the SONHS faculty and Guyana’s leaders was critical to the success of the partnership. Our visit helped us share our vision in person so that together we could generate the passion required to see this to the end.”

CULTURALLY TAILORED TEACHING

Mckay and Salani mentored and instructed Guyan’s nursing educators through the certificate course, which ran from November 2015 to June 2016. They delivered a weekly e-lecture via simulation scenarios specific to their own hospital and clinical environments, Mckay emphasizes.

The third course taught participants how to develop different measures of evaluation, such as grading rubrics and test questions, and formative and summative methods for clinical evaluation. The course culminated with a practicum requiring participants to put their new knowledge into practice by designing and conducting a simulation education scenario.

A BOLD VISION FOR GUYANA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Guyana’s health and nursing leaders have a bold vision to transform nursing education in their country. After training a large cohort of nursing faculty through the SONHS certificate course, they hope to identify participants who will go on to complete master’s degrees. And it doesn’t stop there: they hope to see advanced practice nurses working in Guyana within ten years, as well as postgraduate training in nursing education and other specialty areas.

“The big picture across the Caribbean region and globally is that nurse leaders must have certain core competencies to be prepared to teach,” says Benn. “Our goal is to create an indigenous program supervised by the cream of the crop. But we need the commitment of PAHO and of the government of Guyana to continue investing in nursing education, and to support training course graduates at the master’s level so they can become our local trainers.”

With that big picture in mind, Mckay and Salani are already looking beyond their work in Guyana to explore how they might help build capacity among nursing faculty in the region.

“The certificate course is a model of a replicable and sustainable product that can be implemented in other countries with similar nursing faculty education needs to enhance nursing education throughout the Caribbean,” says Mckay.

Bringing together chief nursing officers and nursing leaders from throughout the Caribbean to forge a collective vision and plan for nursing education development was the objective of PAHO’s Subregional Workshop on the Development of Competencies for Nurse Educators, which convened in the Eastern Caribbean/Central American region in December 2015.

 Rather than working in silo, the meeting offered participants an opportunity to pool their resources and expertise.

“Those partnerships are beneficial for nursing education in Guyana, and they send the message that we are part of a global community and that we don’t have to solve our challenges by ourselves,” says Benn. “There is a collective will, a collective wisdom, and collective resources that are available for us to do well.”

Representing the SONHS in Belize was associate professor of clinical and associate dean for master’s programs and global initiatives Johis Ortega, B.S.N. ’92, M.S.N. ’06, Ph.D. ’11. The SONHS: PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre will host the meeting when the network re-convenes in Miami in June 2016.

ALREADY MAKING AN IMPACT

By highlighting the importance of helping faculty improve their teaching skills, the certificate course is already impacting Guyana’s nursing education community. Individual faculty are identifying their strengths and weaknesses—and changing the way they approach their work as teachers.

“The SONHS faculty have helped model effective teaching and learning strategies, and that sends a strong message,” says Benn. “In each weekly session there are clear reminders and clear identification of best practices.”

Mckay and Salani are just as appreciative of the faculty they have taught. “They’re able to educate nurses without all the technology and resources that we have,” says Mckay. “Their positivity, enthusiasm, and passion for education and for nursing come through. What they’re able to accomplish within a limited-resource system speaks to the dedication of these nursing educators.”

For his part, Hilary Christopher has wasted no time in sharing his new skills and strategies with Guyana’s nursing community.

“I firmly believe this course will impact Guyana because we all learned the same content and there’s more interschool collaboration,” he says. “We all face similar constraints and challenges, but if we pool our resources and ideas, we can enhance the teaching environment, develop our critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, and standardize the delivery of curricular content. Ultimately, more highly motivated educators and a more stimulating learning experience will lead to greater student success.”
Faculty Publication Named Article of the Year

Across the country, a new surge of overdoses and crime reported by health-care and law enforcement personnel is attributable to abuse of synthetic cannabinoids (SC). Two SONHS faculty members contributed to the literature on the topic with a publication that earned them the Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services’ Article of the Year Award. The elite recognition includes a cash prize and an invitation for the authors to become members of the journal’s editorial board or review panel.

The winning publication, “Synthetic Cannabinoids: The Dangers of their Use,” state the authors. SONHS Assistant Professor of Clinical Victoria Miriani was selected by the National Hispanic Science Network on Drug Abuse (NHSN) to participate in the ‘New Investigators in Drug Abuse Research’ panel at the 15th annual NHSN conference last year. The panel highlighted the work of early career scientists who, like Gattamorta, are conducting drug abuse research across a variety of disciplines, from basic to social science.

Taking Charge, Effecting Change

Like so many who choose nursing as a career, Mary Hooshmand, Ph.D. ’10, has an intuitive sense of what needs to be done—and then she does it.

As regional nursing director for Children’s Medical Services (CMS) in the Southeast Florida Region, for example, her responsibilities ran the gamut from operations and budget to personnel and care coordination for more than 19,000 children in six counties. Despite these demands, she responded to a critical need by establishing a telehealth network within the structure of the Florida Department of Health to serve youth with special needs and their families. She also created a new and potentially groundbreaking instrument, the Miami Acuity Tool (MAT), to help efficiently allocate state resources to this population.

Not only did Hooshmand develop the MAT, but she took on the role of chief educator to ensure that nurse care coordinators in every CMS office were properly trained to use it.

Identifying needs, finding solutions, and facilitating implementation are skills that Hooshmand honed during her 30 years as a public health nurse in New York and Florida. A three-year Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Executive Nurse Fellows Program identified and enhanced these qualities while changing the trajectory of Hooshmand’s career. It was during this program that Donna E. Shalala, then president of the University of Miami, mentored Hooshmand, introducing her to SONHS Dean Nilda (Nina) Peragallo Montano and encouraging her to pursue her Ph.D. After earning her doctorate, Hooshmand became a part-time lecturer at the SONHS while continuing her work with the CMS. By 2012 she was teaching full time, and in 2015 she was named associate dean for Doctor of Nursing Practice Programs.

“Even after she left her position with the State of Florida, Mary dedicated two entire summers, including weekends, to voluntarily finish the MAT and lead its piloting, with promising results,” Peragallo Montano says, describing Hooshmand’s dedication.

Hooshmand hopes to instill future nurse leaders with the same drive to effect positive change in the health care system, particularly in underserved and vulnerable populations.

“The leadership path I’ve traveled and my experience have prepared me to build the D.N.P. program and partner with the community at large to develop practice initiatives for the students that are meaningful to our partners in health care,” Hooshmand says. “It’s been incredibly rewarding for me to watch our students blossom, to see them grow from new doctoral candidates to become actively engaged in developing exceptional projects.”

Recipient of a 2015 Florida GEM (Giving Excellence Meaning) Award, Hooshmand continues to be a role model for her students, as she tirelessly pursues her various special interests. She is working to expand use of the innovative telemedicine system she developed to promote family-centered systems of care for special needs children in their home communities, and she recently completed her first paper comparing various aspects of telemedicine to traditional care, which was published in Telemedicine and e-Health.

She is also a co-investigator of “The Future of Nursing Science: Encouraging Minority Nurses to Pursue a Ph.D.,” funded by a Florida Blue Foundation grant.

“By encouraging gifted students from minority backgrounds to pursue a doctoral education, we hope to advance the goal of having a nursing research workforce that mirrors the increasingly diverse demographics of South Florida and of the nation,” she says.
1960s
Joanne Cantor Friedman, B.S.N. ’67, is the sole clinician at the STD Clinic at William W. Backus Hospital in Norwich, Connecticut, where she has served for 20 years. She was previously an adult and women’s health care nurse practitioner in the Institute of Health Professionals at Massachusetts General Hospital. She and her husband, a urologist, just celebrated 47 years of marriage. The couple raised five children including two doctors, a nurse practitioner, hedge fund vice president, and a peace corps statistician. “I continue to enjoy my patients and hope to work ad infinitum,” she says.

Marilyn Van Houten, B.S.N. ’69, of Miami, sang with The Heroines Choir—a group of breast cancer survivors—in a performance of the national anthem for UM Women’s Basketball’s Breast Cancer Awareness game on February 21, 2016. It was the second time The Heroines Choir performed on campus. The day prior she also celebrated a “golden anniversary” for 50 years of membership in Delta Gamma during Founders Day at the BankUnited Center.

1970s
Clare Good, B.S.N. ’78, of Port St. Lucie, Florida, reports sad and happy news. Her “loving husband Robert Moshes passed away on February 11, 2016,” and she has “a great-great-grand-daughter who turned 1 in March!” All five generations of her family live in Florida. She is still treasurer of the Treasure Coast Organization of Nurse Executives, and an emerita member of both the Florida Nurses Association and Florida Organization of Nurse Executives. “Life goes on!” she says.

Ann M. Thrailkill, C.N.P. ’76, is still practicing as a full-time nurse practitioner in primary care and women’s health at the VA Hospital/VA Palo Alto Health System in California, where she has worked for 30 years. She recently stepped down as director for both the hospital’s Women Veterans program and the regional Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN 21) women veterans program, “in order to spend more time giving health care to veterans.” She is still the maternity coordinator, and she precepts Stanford University medical residents and nurse practitioner students from the University California San Francisco (UCSF), which she has done for 25 years. She also does volunteer work at the Lucille Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford. Thrailkill is a member of the California Association of Nurse Practitioners, American Nurses Association/California, Sigma Theta Tau honor society, plus Bay Area non-docs, and AAUW. She loves golf and travel, and enjoys visiting her daughter, a manager at a concierge hotel, and two college-age grandchildren in Boston. She also has a son living in Dublin, Ireland, who is a chemist and patent attorney for a U.S. biotech/pharmaceutical firm. “So glad to stay in touch with U of Miami,” she adds.

1980s
Lissette Exposito, B.S.N. ’86, president and CEO of Orange Accountable Care Organization of South Florida—an Accountable Care Organization (ACO) participating in the Medicare Shared Savings Program, announces they were the leading performing ACO in South Florida for the reporting year 2015. Exposito has over 25 years of experience in the health care industry and is a member of the UM Citizens Board.

1990s
Carol Olivier, M.S.N. ’90, has been a midwife for 25 years in numerous national settings. Currently residing in Des Moines, Washington, she is “happily cutting back on work, and studying more music, dance, and curanderismo.” She says her greatest joy is that her daughter, Lily Olivier, A.B. ’06, who lives close by and is also a midwife, had her first baby, named Asher.

Danielle Tehrani, B.S.N. ’97, completed an adult nurse practitioner M.S.N. program and graduated magna cum laude in August 2015 from South University in Savannah, Georgia.

1980s
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2000s

Jessica MacIntyre, B.S.N. ’00, began her career at South Miami Hospital on the oncology floor. Two years later she was recruited by Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center for the past 14 years. She is director of Clinical Operations for the Cancer Center Director and also functions as a nurse practitioner. She is an advanced oncology certified nurse practitioner with a passion to improve cancer care and in that capacity started a new Patient and Family Advisory Council at Sylvester.

Fayola Delica, B.S.N. ’05, author and community advocate, reports she is running for the Florida House of Representatives 2016 elections, House District 108, in Miami-Dade County. The district includes the municipalities of North Miami, Miami Shores, El Portal, Biscayne Park, Little Haiti, Liberty City, Liberty Square, and Arcola Lakes. She is of Haitian descent and the niece of the late Rev. Dr. Gérard Jean-Juste, a icon in the Haitian Community. The primary election will be on August 30, 2016.

LeAnne Young Kerr, B.S.N. ’05, is currently the pediatric trauma coordina- tor at Joe DiMaggio Children’s Hospital in Hollywood, Florida. She is a course director for two national trauma-nursing courses—Trauma Nursing Core Course (TNCC) and Advanced Trauma Care for Nurses (ATCN)—and was published in the Journal of Trauma Nursing (2014).

Dayanis Velis, B.S.N. ’08, accepted the position of breast nurse navigator for the new Breast Program at UM Sylvester in Plantation, Florida on December 17, 2015. “It is an honor to be back at UM working with dedicated and caring professionals,” she says with pride.

2010s

Julia E. Tomaro, B.S.H.S. ’12, an assistant athletic trainer at Stevens Athletics in Hoboken, New Jersey, and UM classmate and accountant Brian E. Moschetti, B.B.A. ’12, M.Acc. ’12, were engaged on November 27, 2015. Tomaro is an active member of the National Athletic Trainers’ Association, as well as the Athletic Trainers’ Society of New Jersey.

Rafael Moisés Read, B.S.N. ’14, found her thirst for education was reawakened when she returned to SONHS to pursue a B.S.N. degree, after working for 30 years as a registered nurse. She now plans to pursue an M.S.N.-N.P. degree. She currently works at UM’s Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, where she has been employed for the past 19 years. “Since my children are grown, and I am divorced, what better way to occupy my [free] time than to take courses,” she says.

Solange Sierra, B.S.N. ’14, started working in the Emergency Department (ED) of University of Miami Hospital (UMH) in October 2014. She became the chair of the ED’s Unit Practice Council in December 2014. She was also elected interim vice president of UMHS’s Professional Nursing Practice Council (PNPC), then elected president of UMHS’s PNPC for 2016. She had a baby girl in March 2016 and was accepted to the M.S.N. Family Nurse Practitioner program at the School of Nursing and Health Studies beginning January 2017.

Clare Hoonhout, B.S.N. ’14, works as an Emergency Department RN (Clinical Nurse III) for Florida Hospital in Kissimmee, Florida, and has achieved Certified Emergency Nurse (CEN) certification.

Japonesa M. Read, B.S.N. ’14, accepted the interview, got the job, and soon found herself on a career path she had not even imagined.

Today, Capt. Carol Lindsey, M.S.N. ’91, an officer in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, speaks enthusiastically about the opportunities she has had to advance in her profession while making a difference for vulnerable populations in need of medical care and education. Lindsey began her career in the Public Health Service caring for immigrants detained at the Krome Service Processing Center in west Miami-Dade County. She soon learned that being an active-duty officer in one of the seven uniformed services carries a unique set of responsibilities.

“Our mission in the Public Health Service is to protect, promote, and maintain the health and safety of all Americans,” she explains. “We are a rapid and effective response team to public health needs, and we are on call to provide care to the community in any situation where federal assistance is requested.”

Although officers in the Public Health Service are non-combatants, they are expected to deploy, either domestically or internationally, when their expertise is needed. For example, nurses from the Public Health Service were deployed to Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, to Thailand after the earthquake and tsunami in 2004, and to New York City after the 9/11 attacks. Lindsey counts her deployments as some of her most fulfilling experiences.

“While I was with Immigration Health Service, I deployed to Tinian, one of the Mariana Islands in the South Pacific, to care for victims of human trafficking who had been detained there,” she says. “The island is so small that our clinic consisted of tents set up on the tarmac.”

This type of resourcefulness is not unusual, Lindsey says, recalling her deployment to Baton Rouge after Hurricane Gustav in 2008, when she helped set up a clinic in a gymnasium at Louisiana State University to provide round-the-clock care for nursing home residents who had been evacuated there. Lindsey also served on the hospital ship USNS Comfort in 2009, traveling to Haiti and the Dominican Republic on a humanitarian mission.

“Close to home, we oversaw federally qualified health centers serving the uninsured or underinsured.”

“I worked in some really isolated areas, where I saw people who were so poor they were living in basins,” she recalls. “Visiting health centers in these areas, seeing how they provide care, and talking to patients was enlightening. I was fortunate to be able to facilitate some health care for them.”

Lindsey notes the Public Health Service offers a variety of opportunities. During her 14 years at Krome, she served as senior clinical nursing specialist, chief nurse, and nurse practitioner. For the last 11 years, she has been stationed at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in Rockville, Maryland, where she is senior advisor for the Office of Northern Health Services, Bureau of Primary Health Care.

“We have officers at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Indian Health Service, and the list goes on,” she says. “The bottom line is we provide health care to the American people in whatever capacity they need us. The difference we can make in helping people gain access to quality health care is palpable.”

For more information, visit the Health Resources and Services Administration at hrsa.gov or the United States Public Health Service at usphs.gov.
Dedicated to Public Health through Service

Sophomore Kristiana Yao is laser-focused on improving the health of vulnerable populations, which she calls her “career mission.” The path she is taking to get there is as a double major—in public health at UM’s School of Nursing and Health Studies and in Health Sector Management and Policy at UM’s School of Business Administration.

“Integrating the two curricula advances my understanding of the health care system though a social justice lens,” says Yao, a self-described “health policy nerd.”

Yao is a UM Foote Fellow and a Stamps Leadership Scholar on a full merit scholarship. The Illinois native chose to study at UM, and specifically to enroll in the SONHS undergraduate public health program, because “interdisciplinary study is strongly encouraged, and community practice opportunities are ample in a range of multicultural settings.”

Her extracurricular activities reinforce her commitment to “advancing population health through the public service sector.” A student leader, she is president of the Student Health Advisory Committee and member of the UM President’s Coalition on Sexual Violence Prevention and Education.

Beyond campus, she served last semester as an intern in patient access at Jackson Health System, facilitating the provision of services to uninsured patients.

“My dream job would involve innovating win-win regulatory structures that incentivize the private sector to serve public interest,” says Yao, who got a taste of that role last summer, when she interned with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in its Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight (CCIIO) in Washington, D.C.

“CCIIO is charged with implementation of the Affordable Care Act, ensuring quality, affordable coverage is accessible to all Americans,” explains Yao. “I was in the office when the Supreme Court decision was handed down, basically affirming the existence of non-state-based marketplaces, and everybody cheered! It was exhilarating to work every day alongside the architects of our nation’s groundbreaking health care reform movement.”

Her job duties at CCIIO involved researching different states’ regulatory landscapes and communicating with external stakeholders and partners in reform. One of her original policy pieces, a proposed provider network adequacy standard, was published in the Federal Register, the official daily publication of the U.S. federal government.

“The experience really opened my eyes to how much the federal government does to promote accessible health insurance coverage,” she says. “The passion and dedication of the employees at CCIIO completely blow away the stereotype of a slow, bureaucratic office. I was inspired by their energy.”

Reflecting on what she learned during her D.C. internship, Yao articulates, “If you want to be a successful public health professional in today’s world, you have to know how to navigate our political climate in order to enact evidence-based, multi-stakeholder solutions.”

She credits her experience at the SONHS with preparing her to pursue a career improving the health of populations. “This school and its amazing professors have instilled in me a social justice-oriented, ecological perspective of public health, which will inform every future project I undertake.”
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