

Unison

FALL 2021 | VOLUME 20



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SCHOOL OF NURSING

Unison is published by the University of Connecticut School of Nursing to highlight the accomplishments of its faculty, staff, students, alumni, and donors.

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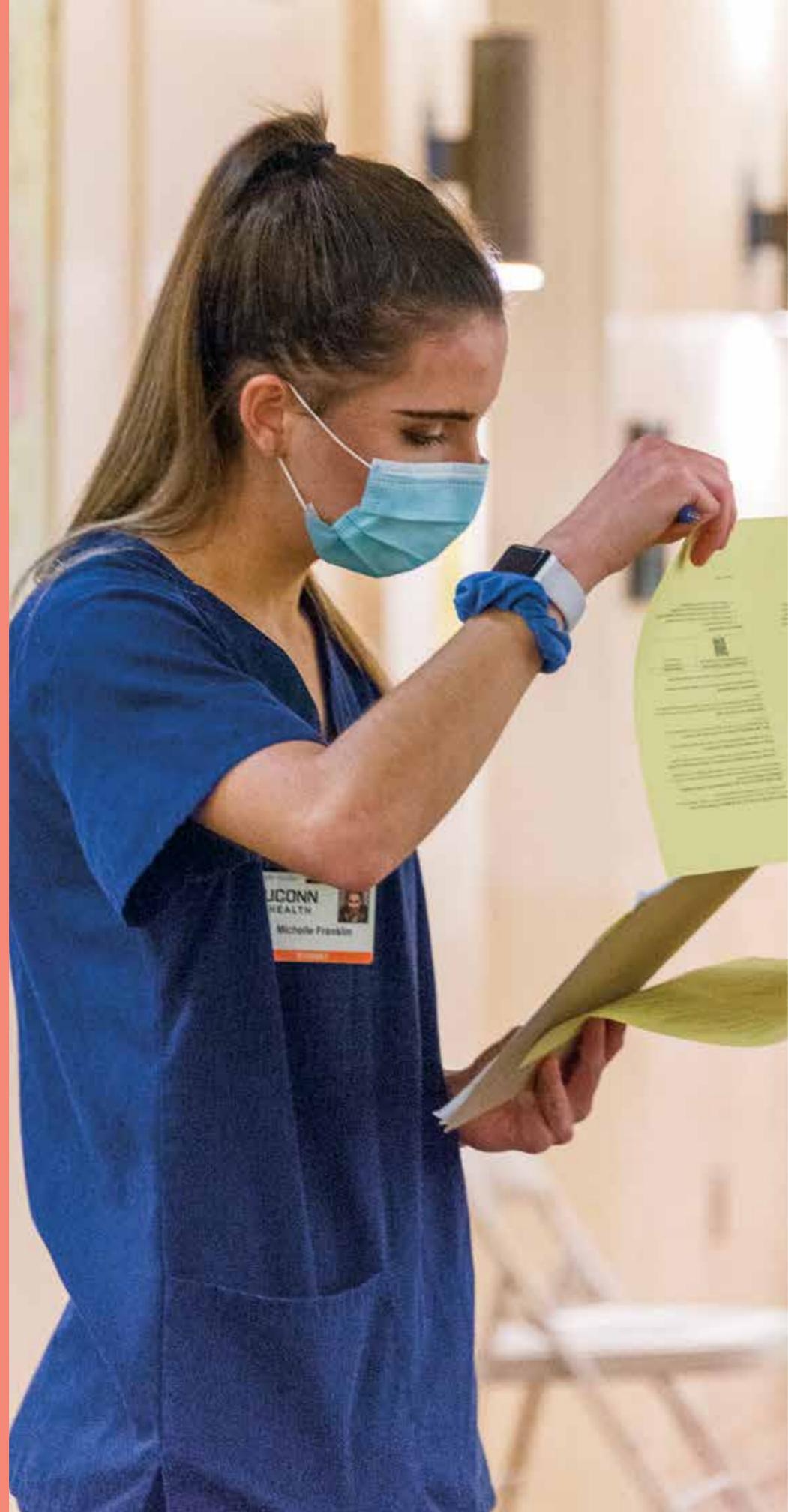
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Cover image: Clinical coordinator and instructor Amanda Moreau supervises Alyssa Michaud '22 (NUR), left, and Michelle Franklin '21 (NUR), right, as they practice injections in an orange during a Covid-19 vaccination clinic at UConn Health in January. (Tina Encarnacion/UConn Health photo)



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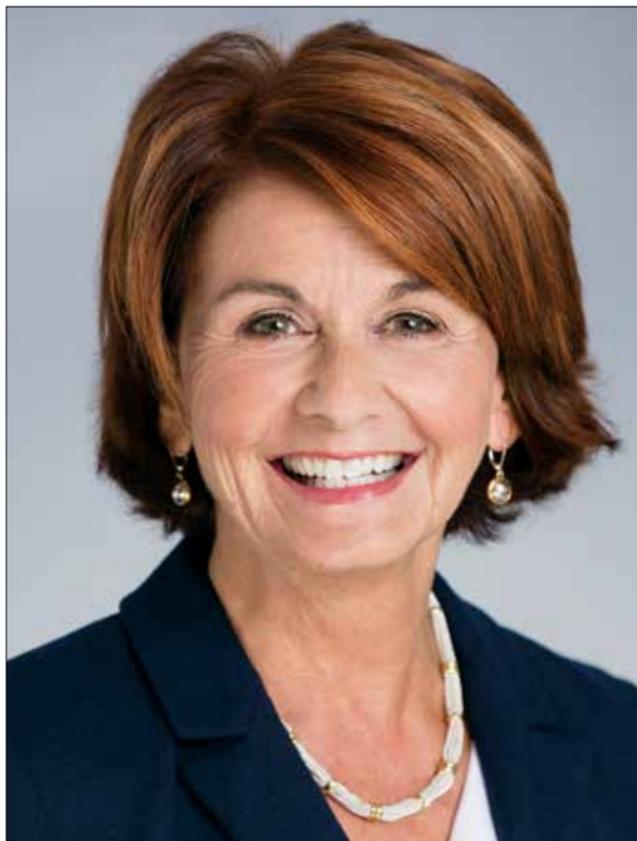


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Some of the images depicted in this publication were captured prior to Covid-19 safety precautions. At this time, the University is committed to following all state and CDC guidelines to keep our community safe.

In Unison, Making the Impossible Possible



While Covid-19 has dominated the nation and the world during the past year, thanks to the dedication, flexibility, and innovation of University administration and School of Nursing faculty, staff, students, alumni, and donors, the School has advanced in innumerable ways. We have more than survived the “flood”; we have taken the “tide” and gone on to learn, to grow, and to prosper, as you will see in the following pages.

Simulation, an increasingly important resource in nursing education, took on an even more vital role as students were displaced from clinical sites. Working creatively, faculty and staff provided students with the clinical judgment and skills necessary for their nursing education. Our use of technology and innovative approaches have already better positioned us for the future. Students learned more than clinical and reasoning skills. They learned to be flexible and open to new ways of learning, gaining an ability to adapt that is so critical to the workplace.

In addition to the clinical care provided by our faculty and students, including participation in vaccination efforts, our nurse scientists quickly shifted their research efforts to address the needs of diverse and underserved populations affected by Covid-19. Our education efforts

also did not stand still as we introduced two new certificate programs (Life Story Practice and Research; Dementia Care) and two new master’s tracks (Nurse Educator and Nurse Leadership), transitioned all our master’s program tracks to an online format, and witnessed the impressive output from our innovation focus, including our recent certificate program in Healthcare Innovation.

Confronted by clinical constraints and teaching challenges, recognition of our many successes was even more meaningful during this difficult time. Our U.S. News and World Report rankings for our master’s, online master’s, and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs energized us all. In addition, our ability to recruit outstanding clinical and tenure-track faculty — as well as staff to support us in our mission — during a pandemic, affirmed our strong standing among other top-tier universities. Our greatest success, however, was that of our Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and its initiatives, including the establishment of a dedicated external advisory committee that is helping guide our efforts.

In addition to recognizing the amazing efforts of our faculty, including our adjunct faculty, staff, and students, I am most grateful to our clinical partners and to our loyal alumni and donors. You, in unison, have made all things possible during this most impossible of times!

— Dean Deborah Ann Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN



“Simulation, an increasingly important resource in nursing education, took on an even more vital role as students were displaced from clinical sites.”

Faculty Support the Fight Against Covid-19 Through Research

Every war has a front, where two opposing forces face off in battle. In this pandemic, the front has clearly been the hospitals and health care facilities where nurses and other workers fight for the lives of their patients against an invisible disease.

But every army also has a middle line of defense, those who support front-line warriors and help make tactical decisions. During this health crisis, those are the researchers — the scientific minds who work to improve the tools the front-line health care workers have at their disposal.

Several nurse researchers at the School of Nursing have entered the fray this past year, studying all aspects of the virus: increasing testing and vaccination, how your microbiome affects your vaccine response, the experiences of mothers giving birth, and even preventative health behaviors. Their work has been eye-opening and vital to defeating Covid-19.

Who Follows Public Health Guidelines and Why?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had a handful of rules for Americans during the pandemic: wash your hands, do not touch your face, keep a distance of at least 6 feet between you and other people, wear a mask, and stay home when possible.

But what factors motivated some individuals to follow these guidelines as closely as possible, while others ignored the recommendations completely — and what can we learn from the experience of Covid-19 that can help improve strategies that promote preventative health behaviors?

In March 2020, Natalie Shook, Ph.D., launched a yearlong study to look at how behavior and social attitudes change, and what factors influence those changes, when people in the United States are faced with the threat of widespread disease. The study was backed by a National Science Foundation (NSF) RAPID grant.



Natalie Shook

“We saw this as an opportunity to really think about whether we can identify individual factors — personality factors — that would predict engagement in preventative health behaviors,” says Shook, a social psychologist and a professor in the School of Nursing.

“From there, for future pandemics or future viral threats, are there different strategies or interventions that we could develop to facilitate a stronger response and, hopefully, prevent spread of infectious diseases faster?”

More than other factors, strong feelings of germ aversion and pathogen disgust are significantly associated with concern about Covid-19 and preventative behavior, according to findings Shook published in the journal *PLOS ONE* in August 2020.

She and her team asked study participants about their overall concerns about Covid-19 and how often they engaged in preventative health behaviors, such as physical distancing, frequent hand washing, avoiding touching their face, wearing a face mask, and cleaning and disinfecting.

“What we found in our data set was that the most consistent predictors of concern about Covid and then engagement in preventative health behaviors are actually those psychological disease avoidance factors,” Shook says.

The researchers also found that the people most likely to be impacted by the virus are not necessarily those most likely to be engaging in preventative behaviors.

“Older participants reported more concern about Covid, which makes sense — they are at higher risk,” Shook says. “But when we looked at preventative health behaviors, we were not necessarily seeing that older adults were engaging more in preventative health behaviors. So, where there was the concern, that was not necessarily translating into the behaviors that could protect them.”

Interestingly, Shook and her team also found that older adults managed the stress of the pandemic better than

younger adults, reporting less depression and anxiety despite also experiencing greater general concern about Covid-19.

Their somewhat paradoxical findings, published in the journal *Aging and Mental Health* in November, suggest that although greater psychological distress has been reported during the pandemic, older age may offer a buffer against negative feelings brought on by the virus’s impact.

While Shook and her team found a significant positive association between the likelihood of contracting Covid-19 and feelings of anxiety in study respondents between the ages of 18 and 49, that relationship did not exist for older participants. The finding, the researchers wrote, aligns with other research showing better emotional management of stress in older age.

“What we see within our data is that there seems to be kind of this age buffering where, despite greater concerns about Covid and rightly so, our older adults are not reporting higher rates of anxiety or depression than younger adults,” Shook says. “The data suggest that older adults are better able to regulate their emotions and better able to cope with all of the stress and uncertainty.”

Shook’s team also found that job insecurity and financial concern are associated with greater symptoms of depression and anxiety even among those who stayed employed during the pandemic. Those findings were published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, or *JOEM*, in September 2020.

“We definitely are seeing, within our employed participants, higher rates of anxiety than in individuals who indicated they were not employed,” says Shook, noting that most study participants who are not employed are retirees. “Controlling for demographics, controlling for income level, and also taking into account participant health and concerns about Covid — and the extent to which people were engaging in social distancing or quarantine — we are seeing that job security and financial concerns are the significant predictors associated with anxiety and depression.”

Welcoming a New Baby During Covid-19

Giving birth can be stressful at the best of times, but giving birth during a pandemic? That is a whole other level.

Board of Trustees distinguished professor Cheryl Beck, DNSc, CNM, FAAN, collaborated on an internet



Older adults managed the stress of the pandemic better than younger adults, reporting less depression and anxiety despite also experiencing greater general concern about Covid-19.



study with Deepika Goyal, Ph.D., APRN, FNP, a professor at San José State University, to dive into the emotional and psychological impacts Covid-19 is having on mothers with newborn children.

“It is looking at the impact of Covid-19 on women giving birth, and then also in the

beginning postpartum period,” Beck says. “Because some of the hospitals will only allow the partner to come in, mothers cannot have this normal support system that they wanted to.”

As a mixed methods study, the researchers collected both quantitative and qualitative data from 261 women.

They used the City Birth Trauma Scale, which is a 29-item self-report instrument, to measure participants’ postpartum post-traumatic stress symptoms. The questions help identify post-traumatic stress disorder criteria, such as directly experiencing the traumatic event; symptoms of re-experiencing; avoidance; negative cognitions and mood; hyperarousal; duration of symptoms; significant distress or impairment; and exclusion criteria or other causes.

While the researchers’ analysis was not complete at press time, preliminary results showed that 79% of the women experienced negative cognitions and mood, and over half of them said their symptoms caused them distress. Most women reported that their symptoms lasted for over a month and that they started within the first six months after giving birth.

Beck says six qualitative themes have emerged from the women’s responses so far: so much stress and fear from all directions; nothing felt normal or personal; it felt like a prison; isolated/secluded/lonely; sadness that sharing

the celebration was not possible; and a blessing in disguise.

Covid-19 and Your Gut

There is a strong connection between your gut microbiome and your immune responses, says associate professor Wanli Xu, Ph.D., RN.



In April, she launched a study to examine how a person’s gut reacts to the Covid-19 vaccine and if that information can lead to the most effective dosing.

“There are many studies that have been done to understand how the gut microbiome affects asthma, immune disorders, and more,” she says. “For this study, we want to track gut health during the vaccination process to see if the composition of the microbiome changes after the Covid-19 vaccine is introduced.”

The gut microbiome refers to the nearly 100 trillion microbes in a person’s digestive system, including bacteria, viruses, and fungi. When people are born, they have very few microbe species in their gut, but quickly develop more as they ingest milk and food and interact with their environment.

“Most of the bacteria in your gut is helpful,” Xu says. “It digests food so your body can absorb it and it can even boost your immune system. Some researchers think of your gut microbiome as your second brain.”

The makeup of everyone’s gut microbiome is unique and evolves as they age, but it stabilizes to a degree once they reach adulthood. Then, as people continue to age, the diversity of the species within their gut decreases.

Xu, along with her co-researchers Xiaomei Cong, Ph.D., RN, FAAN; Yanjiao Zhou, M.D., Ph.D.; and Penghua Wang, Ph.D., wants to see how the gut microbiome affects individuals’ immunity induced by the Covid-19 vaccines.

“Generally, we see less responsiveness to the Covid-19 vaccines in older people,” Xu says. “And we also see less microbiome diversity in older people. We think it is highly likely we will find some connection there.”

The results from the study could help inform decisions related to adjusting doses to make the vaccines more effective.

A Vaccinated World

In December 2020, when the Food and Drug Administration began approving Covid-19 vaccines for emergency use, Shook started developing and testing different kinds of messages to see if they could persuade individuals to get vaccinated. The research was supported through the University’s Office of the Vice President for Research’s Covid-19 Research Seed Funding Program.

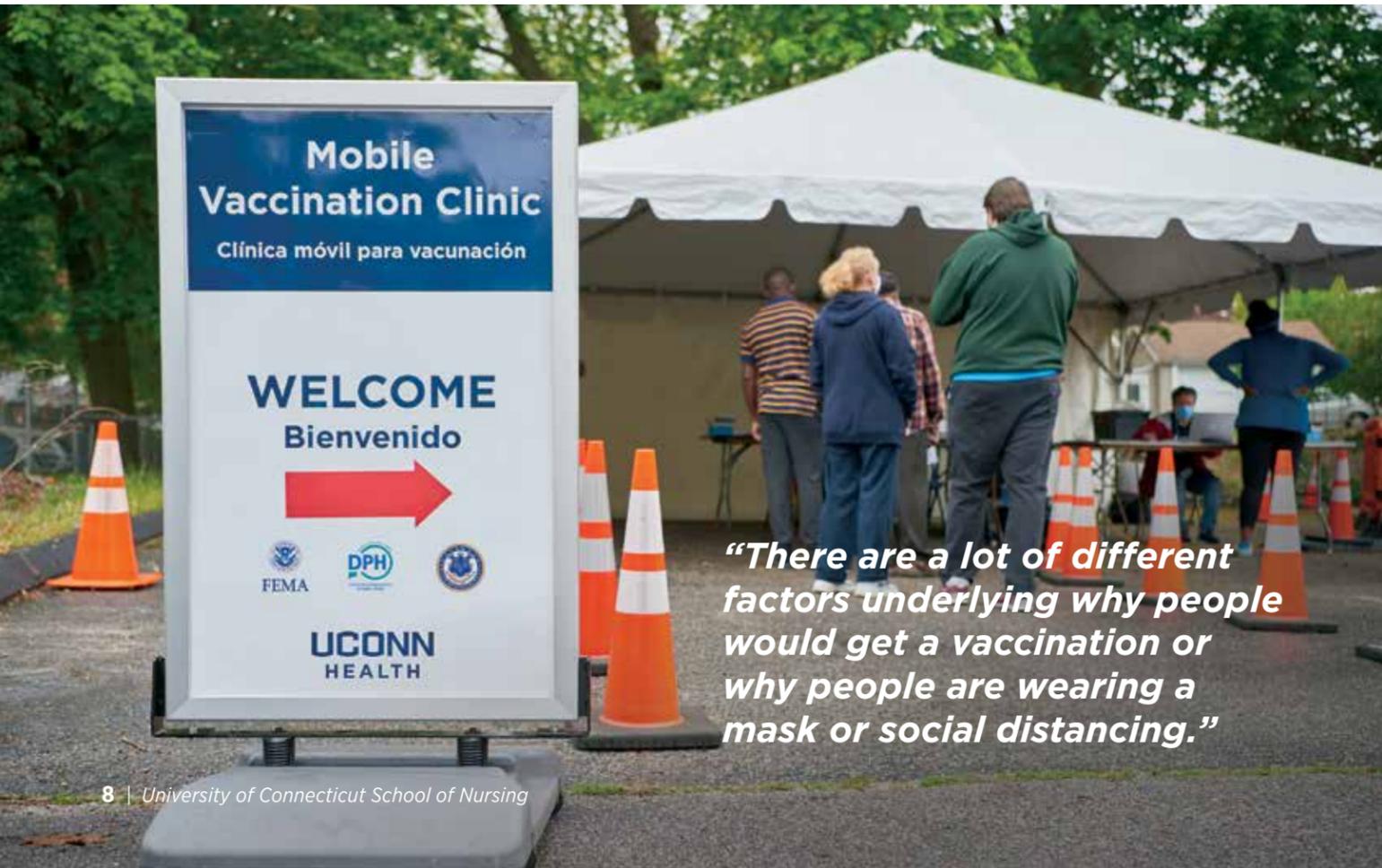
“There are a lot of different factors underlying why people would get a vaccination or why people are wearing a mask or social distancing,” Shook says. “Developing an array of messages that tap into those different motivations is really important.”

About 200 people who said they were unlikely to, or unsure if they would, get a vaccine were recruited for Shook’s first pilot study and randomly divided into three groups. Participants in two of the groups read messages about Covid-19 vaccination that either educated them about the virus or induced disgust, while the third group did not receive any messages and was used to see if vaccine hesitancy naturally changes over time.

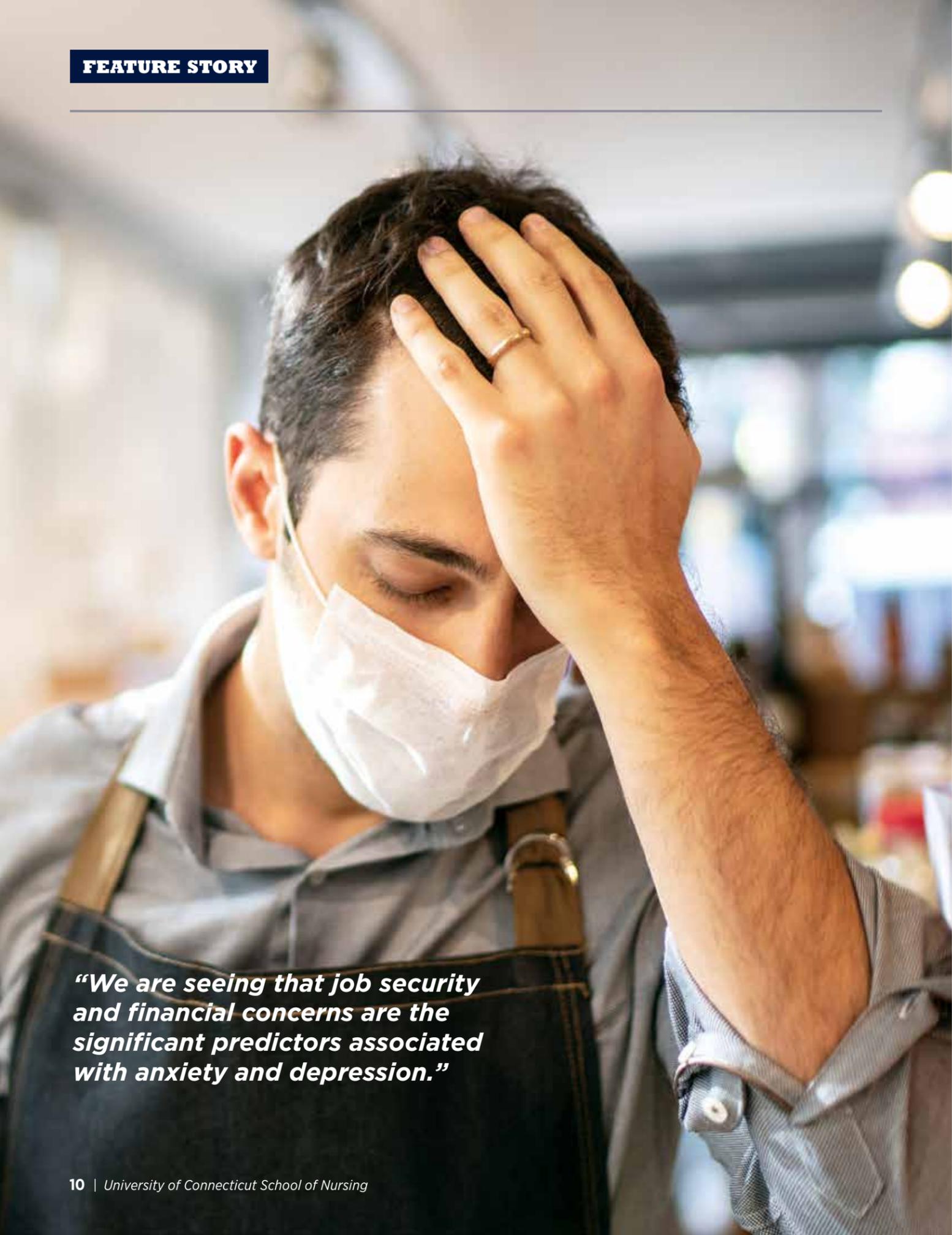
Individuals in the “disgust” group received messages that contained information about the vaccines, Covid-19 symptoms, and images that induced disgust. In the “education” group, the messages contained information about the benefits of vaccination and corrected misunderstandings about Covid-19. Afterward, all participants filled out a survey that measured their likelihood to get a vaccine, as well as their other vaccination-related attitudes.

While Shook’s research is still ongoing, preliminary results showed a general pattern that messages that induced disgust lowered participants’ intent to receive a vaccine. A second pilot study had similar results, though the messages that participants received were changed slightly to fully separate vaccine information from disgust-inducing content.

As *Unison* went to press, an undergraduate researcher on Shook’s team was beginning a third pilot study — supported by a UConn Summer Undergraduate Research Fund award — targeting young adults who expressed



“There are a lot of different factors underlying why people would get a vaccination or why people are wearing a mask or social distancing.”



“We are seeing that job security and financial concerns are the significant predictors associated with anxiety and depression.”

vaccine hesitancy. Participants will still receive messages that induce disgust, but the researchers will also add messages that promote getting vaccinated in order to benefit the community and others.

“We will see if we get a consistent pattern across these three studies that disgust does not persuade people to get the Covid-19 vaccines,” Shook says. “Previously, we had discovered that germ aversion and disgust are strongly tied to concern about Covid-19 and engaging in preventive health behaviors, including a greater willingness to accept a vaccine. But perhaps these pilots will tell us that vaccine-hesitant individuals have lower disgust sensitivity and disgust messages are not going to push them to engage in this behavior.”

Increasing Access to Testing, Vaccines

One-third of the people who have been diagnosed with Covid-19 in the U.S. are Hispanic, according to the CDC, and nearly half of all pregnant women who have contracted the virus are Hispanic.



Xiaomei Cong

Yet Hispanics only make up 18% of the country’s population.

Researchers Xiaomei Cong, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, and Kelley Newlin Lew, DNSc, RN, ANP-C, CDE, FAAN, say that earlier testing and diagnosis of Covid-19 could help Hispanic families

across Connecticut, so they partnered with the Hispanic Alliance of Southeastern Connecticut to identify what is preventing these families from getting tested in the first place. The study is supported by the University’s Office of the Vice President for Research’s Covid-19 Research Seed Funding Program.

“This study will give us quantitative and qualitative data we will use to develop strategies to potentially help increase Covid-19 screening and vaccination,” Newlin Lew says. “But the strategies will be informed by community members who need these services, and by local leaders and health professionals who can also provide insight.”

To determine which factors influence Hispanic families’ decisions to seek or not seek Covid-19 testing, the



Kelley Newlin Lew

researchers will conduct surveys of 50 underserved Connecticut families with pregnant women and young children up to age 3. The survey questions will help identify what participants perceive to be the benefits and barriers to getting tested and vaccinated; their awareness and

knowledge of Covid-19; and their decision-making process when it comes to testing and vaccination.

Once the survey data are in hand, Cong and Newlin Lew will develop theories of how to increase testing and future vaccination. This part of the study will include a focus group with five Hispanic women and their family members, as well as a focus group with five Hispanic community leaders, health care professionals, and social workers. **U**

Nursing Students Help Administer Covid-19 Vaccines to the Community

The School of Nursing and its students have always been heavily involved in caring for the health of residents across Connecticut, and 2021 was no different. Between January and June, students and faculty spent more than 900 hours administering Covid-19 vaccines in local communities.

“This is a historic moment, and I am so proud of our students for giving their time and skills,” says Dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN. “What an experience for them, knowing that they have played such an important role in containing the coronavirus and protecting the residents of Connecticut.”

Thanks to the leadership of Associate Dean Angela Starkweather, Ph.D., RN, ACNP-BC, CNRN, FAANP, FAAN, students first became involved in vaccination outreach in January, when UConn Health began vaccinating their front-line workers. Around 20 students administered vaccines in the hospital’s Keller lobby and observed patients for any adverse reactions.

“We initially had 85 undergraduate and graduate students express interest in volunteering at that first clinic at UConn Health,” Chyun says. “Due to scheduling, not all were able to participate, but that level of caring speaks volumes about our students.”

That clinic was just the beginning. By early spring, as vaccination appointments became available to more and more people in Connecticut, the School hired Michelle Cole, DNP, MSN, RN, CPN, as community outreach liaison to work with Starkweather and help coordinate with area health care providers.

“Angela and Michelle have been vital to our outreach efforts,” Chyun says. “They have done a phenomenal job finding out which facilities need more hands to administer vaccines and rallying our students accordingly.”

One of the important partnerships that developed between the School of Nursing and Hartford’s Charter Oak Health Center was prompted by alumna Marina Creed ’17 MS, APRN,

FNP-BC, MSCN, who has worked with the center for many years. Creed brought together the School of Nursing’s and the School of Medicine’s Urban Service Track/AHEC Scholars Program to help with the center’s vaccination efforts. Faculty and students volunteered at many of the center’s clinics throughout the spring and summer. Some locations included Christ Church of Deliverance, Dunkin’ Donuts Park, and others.

“What an experience for them, knowing that they have played such an important role in containing the coronavirus and protecting the residents of Connecticut.”

— *Dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN*

Connecticut opened the nation’s first FEMA Mobile Vaccination Unit at the end of March, and UConn Health was one of the four health systems in the state selected to provide clinical oversight and staffing. UConn Health, in turn, asked the School of Nursing to lead two specific days: April 30 in Dayville and May 4 in Willimantic.

“The opportunity to collaborate with UConn Health as part of a statewide initiative was rewarding,” Cole says. “Students and faculty engaged with local communities to accelerate vaccination efforts in identified areas, and students were able to appreciate the impact nursing has on the health of a community from a national, state, and local perspective.”

While demand for vaccines dropped as the calendar turned to summer, the School still continued its work with Charter Oak Health Center and joined forces with Norwalk Community Health Center. These partnerships were especially beneficial to Certificate Entry Into Nursing (CEIN/BS) Program students, whose studies run from January to December and who need to complete clinical hours during the summer semester.

“All of our students and faculty have faced their own

challenges throughout the pandemic, so being able to join forces with our community, listen to concerns, build trust, and work together to get everyone vaccinated has given us all a glimmer of hope,” Starkweather says. “Our students were eager to take part in the vaccination outreach efforts across Connecticut and it has been an inspiration to see them using their knowledge and skills in our communities and as a vital part of our public health response.”

No matter the location, faculty supervised students every step of the way and were impressed with their skills and attentiveness to patients.

“There was one occasion at UConn Health in January where an individual felt dizzy post-vaccination and required further evaluation,” says Amanda Moreau, MSN, RN, a clinical

coordinator and instructor. “The student played a crucial role in identifying that the individual did not feel well and initiated the proper protocol to call for additional medical assistance.”

Cole noted that students provided significant support when individuals at the clinics were hesitant to receive the vaccine. She says students generally were able to successfully engage with the patients, with guidance from the rest of the School of Nursing team, and illicit positive responses.

Normally, nursing students do not administer that many injections in their clinical training, but Kelsey MarcAurele ’22 (NURS) and Rebekah Gerber ’22 (NURS) now say they are pros.

“The School of Nursing clinical instructors and the pharmacists working at the clinics were wonderful,” MarcAurele says. “They let me practice on an orange, gave me pointers on injecting, and made me feel comfortable the whole time. I can now say I am confident in my ability to give intramuscular injections, as I gave almost 200 over three days in January.”

Those doses helped turn the tide in the pandemic.

“It was easy to get lost in the procedure in the moment, but as I reflect back, I realize that these vaccines will save so many lives,” Gerber says. “It is an honor to have played a very small role in distributing the vaccines.” **U**





Nursing classes were a mix of online and in-person during the 2020-2021 academic year, exemplified by clinical instructors Amanda Moreau, MSN, RN, at left, and Denise Morris, MSN, CMSRN, at right below.

Nursing Education During Covid-19: How Virtual Classes and Technology Can Expand Opportunities for Students

Not long after students celebrated their graduation from the UConn School of Nursing this past year, they traded their caps and blue gowns for masks and medical gowns on the front lines of the Covid-19 pandemic.

But there was a moment in 2020 when the School’s administrators worried that undergraduate students would not have enough hours of experience to graduate and qualify for their licensure exam. Hands-on learning opportunities at local health care facilities were hard to come

by for a while, as facilities were stretched thin battling the virus and could not host students.

“We were in close contact with the Board of Examiners for Nursing in 2020, keeping them up to date on students’ progress,” says Dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN. “By December, the Board allowed us to graduate our Certificate Entry Into Nursing Program students with a minimum of 850 clinical hours each. Our students ended up averaging 872 hours each, with an

average of 40% of those hours in the Clinical Simulation Learning Center.”

That high-tech learning center is housed within the Widmer Wing of Storrs Hall, and includes simulation manikins that have the ability to mimic a number of real-life human processes. The center provides undergraduate students a location to transfer knowledge from theory to practice.

“We increased the number of hours that students participated in medical-surgical and behavioral health

simulations,” says Valorie MacKenna, Ph.D., RN, CNE, CHSE, director of simulation-based education for the School. “We used the hours that they earned here to ensure they had enough clinical practice hours to graduate, all while practicing social distancing, with masks, personal protective equipment, and face shields.”

What started as a way to make sure students gained enough experience quickly became an exploration of how technology could advance the nursing curriculum — especially if students were quarantined and could not attend class in the simulation center in Storrs Hall.

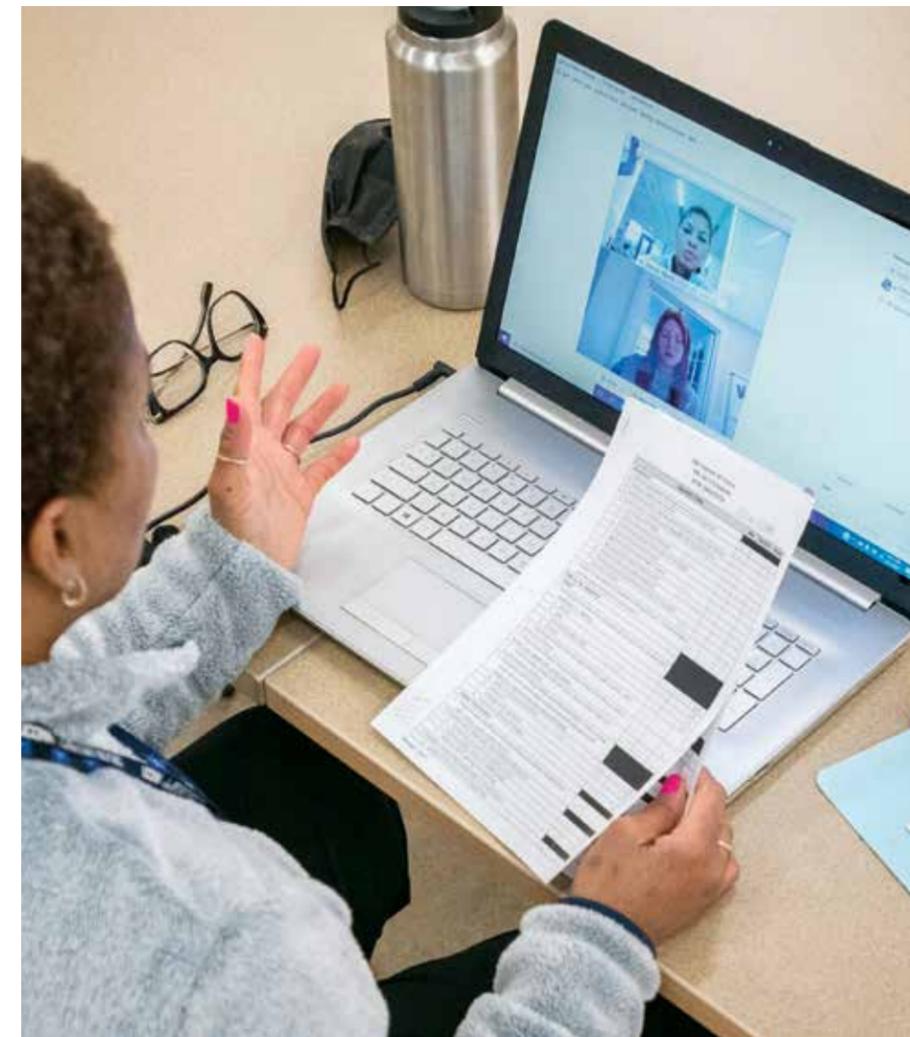
“It was interesting how many remote or ‘tele’ simulation lessons that we did,” MacKenna says. “We would have some students here in the building and others

under quarantine, so we set up laptops in the simulation lab and the quarantined students were able to watch their peers over WebEx and join the discussion afterward.

“Students at home would even speak to the patient through the computer. That became a creative way to keep them engaged even if they could not physically be in the building.”

Kelsey Byrne ’21 (NUR) had to quarantine for two weeks during the spring 2021 semester, when one of her friends tested positive for Covid-19, and attended her simulation classes virtually.

“I would tell the instructor, ‘I am going to assess their lungs,’ and then they would go up and listen and then tell me ‘There is a normal breath sound,’” Byrne says. “You had to explain everything



THE HISTORY OF CLINICAL SIMULATION IN MIDWIFERY AND NURSING

If today’s nursing schools rely on high fidelity clinical simulation technologies, enabling students to practice skills and clinical judgment without risk to patients, their pedigree is long and more humble.

Angelique Marguerite Le Boursier du Coudray was appointed by France’s King Louis XV in 1759 to train rural sages femmes (“wise women,” the term for midwives) throughout the country in order to increase the declining population of France. Madame du Coudray fabricated from cloth a “teaching machine” that modeled a female pelvis, vulva, womb, and a fetus attached with an umbilical cord. Her innovation occurred at a time when male physicians, with new apparatus like forceps, and male accoucheurs had begun to encroach upon the professional domain of the female midwives.

Perhaps best known to several generations of nursing students was the Mrs. Chase manikin. In 1911, the Hartford Hospital School of Nursing contracted with the M.J. Chase Company, a toy doll company in Rhode Island, to manufacture life-size manikins. Designed by Martha Jenks Chase, the first generation featured hinged articulated limbs and was used to teach nursing students how to move, turn, and dress patients. The UConn Dolan Collection of Nursing History includes two Mrs. Chase manikins.

From the midpoint of the 20th century, two trends emerged in nursing’s simulation manikins: higher fidelity through electronics and more specialized units to practice specific procedures.

“George” the heart patient simulator was patented in the early 1970s, providing medical and nursing students the opportunity to listen to a variety of heart sounds, and even to interact with the manikin by taking its pulse and blood pressure readings.

More familiar are resuscitation manikins used by anyone who has taken a CPR course. The Med-e-Train model from the Dolan Collection, manufactured by Anderson in Stamford, Connecticut, had indicator lights to show when positioning of the hand, chest compression, and respiration were adequate.

Long a part of nursing education, clinical simulation has been shown to be not only efficient but also effective in teaching skills and clinical judgment.

FEATURE STORY

you were doing, but going step-by-step helped me realize what I did and did not know.”

Evan Mitchell '21 (NUR) discovered that verbalizing step-by-step instructions would help him on the nursing licensure exam. He had to quarantine twice during the fall 2020 semester due to Covid-19 cases in his apartment complex.

“The virtual classes took me out of my comfort zone,” Mitchell says. “But I realize now that some of the NCLEX questions are set up as a list of actions and you have to know the order.”

While hands-on learning with patients will always be the optimal experience for students, MacKenna says virtual simulation classes are the next-best thing.

“Every time we write a simulation, we incorporate communication, teamwork,

“Every time we write a simulation, we incorporate communication, teamwork, delegation, decision-making, and all of those can be done in a distance setting.”

delegation, decision-making, and all of those can be done in a distance setting,” she says. “We use what technology we have to bring the students who cannot physically be here to fully participate.”

MacKenna admits there were some growing pains learning how to use the technology available to them to its full potential, but overall it opened her eyes

to what is possible.

“The pandemic allowed us to figure out all the things we can accomplish while not necessarily being in each other’s physical presence,” she says. “It is going to change the way we educate; change the way we learn.”

For the simulation center, MacKenna hopes that will mean introducing augmented or virtual reality technology and headsets. Nursing students could practice a variety of procedures and treatments in a simulated, immersive setting.

There are a few companies that are starting to develop nursing simulations. Students wear the headset, hold haptic devices, and are visually transported to an emergency department or patient room. MacKenna says the School of



Some simulation classes were able to be held in-person this past year, with masks and social distancing. Clinical instructors Amanda Moreau, MSN, RN, top left, and Leslie LaPointe, MSN, APRN, CPNP, CHSE, top right, are shown here reviewing a simulation exercise with undergraduate students.

AN END TO COLLEGE THEY WILL NEVER FORGET: SENIORS' PERSPECTIVE OF A YEAR OF ONLINE LEARNING

For the Class of 2021, the abrupt switch to online courses in March 2020 affected their hands-on learning in the simulation lab and at health care facilities just as they felt they were coming into their own as nurses.

“I feel like half of my education is that hands-on experience in clinical, and I couldn’t go at all once the pandemic hit,” says Kelsey Byrne '21 (NUR). “That was definitely the hardest part of the transition to online learning.”

Luckily, when they returned in the fall — as the University was able to have some students on campus, including the School of Nursing juniors and seniors who had clinical responsibilities — there was some sense of normalcy. Clinical hours at area hospitals resumed and some courses were able to be held as hybrid in-person and online.

One interruption students had to look out for, however, was being exposed to the coronavirus and having to quarantine in their dorm or apartment. That would mean not being able to attend their clinical hours and having to make them up through virtual simulation lessons instead.

“That was a common complication and area of stress for a lot of people, because we took the proper precautions, but we couldn’t control external circumstances,” says Evan Mitchell '21 (NUR) and the president for the School of Nursing Class of 2021. Mitchell himself

missed a total of four weeks of in-person classes during the fall semester, due to Covid-19 cases in his apartment complex.

As the spring semester approached, in-person clinical experiences became something students looked forward to as a reprieve from a virtual world.

“In the spring, all of my classes were online, but I did have clinical twice a week where I went to the hospital,” Byrne says. “The clinical portion really made up for it.”

Despite all the logistical hurdles, Mitchell, Byrne, and their classmates were able to complete the clinical hours needed for graduation.

“UConn has prepared us well,” says Byrne, who now works at Northern Westchester Hospital on its mixed medical/oncology unit. “They are very thorough in their teaching and all the professors were wonderful.”

Mitchell agrees, as he’s already at work in the emergency department at the Hospital of Central Connecticut.

“The lessons we’ve learned this past year have matured us and taught us how to take a step back and approach situations differently,” he says. “I think we developed real-world traits like that more quickly than others had in the past and that will help us in the long run.”

Nursing is exploring how it can incorporate such an experience into the curriculum.

“Students could work in small groups in the same virtual space,” she says. “There can be two or three of them in the same room, seeing the same thing, and working on patient care or assessments together. The handsets are so well-designed that when students are checking for a patient’s pulse, there is a little motor that vibrates so they can count it. It is very interactive and thoughtfully designed to make it feel real.”

Augmented reality could even be used to supplement the equipment already available in the simulation center.

“You see the room that you are standing in, but the software overlays items that are not there,” MacKenna says. “It will overlay blood on a manikin, so we do not have fake blood on the floor, but the student wearing the headset sees the blood and the changes in the patient. If there is a type of equipment that we do not have in the room physically, the augmented reality software would allow us to add that into the vision or the view of the learner.”

If another pandemic strikes and students must socially distance again, there is even the potential that two or three students could wear headsets in their separate homes but view the same virtual reality scenario at the same time.

“If I learned anything this year, it is do not knock technology before you try it,” Mitchell says. “The biggest thing with learning is just seeing it first. Simulation allows you, in a safe environment, to practice hands-on skills that you may see only once every two weeks in the hospital. It helps build confidence.”

“We want to go to the next horizon,” MacKenna says, “so that we do not have to be held prisoner to something like a pandemic. We can still educate by using the technology that is available.” **U**

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Reflects on its First Year, Outlines Goals for the Future



MaryAnn Perez-Brescia

In July 2020, the School of Nursing created its Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and named faculty member MaryAnn Perez-Brescia, Ph.D., RN, as its inaugural coordinator.

In just one year's time, significant work has been done to create a learning environment at the School in which every person feels welcome, included, valued, and encouraged to be authentic — but Perez-Brescia is the first to admit that there is still a lot more to do.

"The first thing we must do is listen," she says. "We must be quiet and hear what our students, faculty, and staff are saying. We must be willing to acknowledge our failures in

order to be better. We must not be afraid to be a part of difficult conversations. From there, we can critically analyze what has been created and transform it to what it should be. This will not be easy, but I believe we can do it."

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's goal statement reads: "The UConn School of Nursing understands that our excellence depends on a culture that strongly reflects the expansive variety of identities and experiences within our society, and to that end is dedicated to diversity, equity and inclusion, and to providing a learning environment in which every person feels welcome, included, valued, and encouraged to be authentic. As nurses, our practice is embedded in ethics and social justice. We must embrace and advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion to be consistent with our foundational beliefs as nurses."

To accomplish this, the office will assist with recruiting and retaining a diverse group of students, faculty, and staff; focusing the School's research on the health needs of people underrepresented in science; positioning the School to address the health care needs of all Connecticut's residents; and building relationships with diverse communities.

Perez-Brescia's initial charge is to assess faculty and staff and the School's culture and comfort level related to diversity. Currently, an external advisory committee of local community leaders, who believe in creating opportunities for underrepresented people in education, health, and justice, is working with the School on a strategic plan. They are at the beginning stages of assessing faculty comfort and training needs, then will build the structure to better assist diverse students.

"I hope that everyday programing — such as advising, curriculum, creating policies and procedures, search committees, student recruitment and admission — will be based on a philosophy of diversity, equity, and inclusion," Perez-Brescia says. "Before any decision is made, we need to always be asking ourselves: 'Who will this affect? Who will benefit and who will this create a barrier for? Is it equitable for all students, faculty, and staff?'"

Early in the 2020-2021 academic year, the School of Nursing faculty approved a policy of zero tolerance for disrespect: "Disrespect of others based on personal characteristics, including race, color, religion, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, national origin or citizenship status, is antithetical to the standards and ideals of our school community and of the profession of nursing. It is a violation of the second guiding principle of the School's philosophy, PRAXIS, and of the first provision of the American Nurses Association Code of Ethics."

"I hope that everyday programing — such as advising, curriculum, creating policies and procedures, search committees, student recruitment and admission — will be based on a philosophy of diversity, equity, and inclusion."

The policy also outlines an enforcement process should any infractions occur.

Since September 2020, Perez-Brescia has introduced a variety of programming to increase engagement among the School of Nursing community. Faculty and staff spent the academic year reading "How to Be an Antiracist" by Ibram X. Kendi and Perez-Brescia hosted several virtual book discussions.

Toward the end of October, faculty and staff underwent implicit bias training through Project Implicit. The nonprofit is committed to challenging organizational and institutional disparities through data-driven research and aims to educate the public about bias. During the training sessions, faculty and staff explored perceptual, social, and decision-making biases; learned about bias in action; and were taught how to reduce the impact of bias.

Perez-Brescia has also implemented a monthly e-newsletter that shares that month's diverse holidays and events with students, faculty, and staff. All members of the School of Nursing community are encouraged to submit holidays to be included, and Perez-Brescia includes an explanation with each entry and links to resources for further education.

In May, she moderated a virtual panel discussion for School of Nursing alumni about the diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives underway at the School. A couple of

members of the external advisory committee, along with two UConn professors, were invited as panelists and helped lead a discussion with a high level of alumni engagement.

As the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion looks toward its second year, Perez-Brescia's plans for the School are as equally impressive as her accomplishments from Year One.

"We are in the process of developing a student organization, where students can participate in activities that promote DEI, contribute their thoughts and suggestions, and have a safe place to discuss DEI issues," Perez-Brescia says.

She also has two planned studies submitted to Institutional Review Boards. One is a modified Delphi method study, which will use literature review and the judgment of stakeholders and experts — in this case, the external advisory committee — to develop diverse, equitable, and inclusive language for the Office of DEI webpage on the School of Nursing website. The second study is a Diversity Engagement Survey, a validated instrument used by many other institutions, that will gather data to drive the School's DEI strategic plan.

Perez-Brescia expects the final strategic plan to include: DEI onboarding for faculty, staff, and possibly, students; new hiring strategies to implement a more diverse search process; an expansion of the curriculum to include more DEI teachings; and new accountability measurements by involving DEI in evaluations.

"We are also working with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing to offer training in the fall so we can implement a holistic admissions process," she says. "This will help us admit more diverse students by looking outside of the traditional metrics used in our admissions process. This approach of restructuring our admissions process is part of our work to eliminate systemic barriers put in place that limit diversity, equity, and inclusion."

It is a long list of goals, but the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and its work is a priority for the School of Nursing and Perez-Brescia is up for the challenge.

"Our progress will be measured in many ways; a change in the narratives of faculty, staff, and students is one," she says. "I hope to hear a new narrative that describes inclusivity and equity. Recruitment of diverse faculty, staff, and students is a start, but sustainability and their success will be the final outcome." **U**

A Banner Year for the Master’s Program, With Higher Rankings and a Move to Online

In 1971 the first class was admitted to the School of Nursing’s Master of Science program, which was designed to prepare nurse educators and master clinicians, and later, nurse managers.

Now, 50 years later, the program has transitioned to fully online courses and is ranked among the top 30 nursing master’s programs in the country, according to U.S. News & World Report.

“This recognition from U.S. News is a direct result of the hard work of our amazing faculty and students here at the School of Nursing,” says Dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN. “Their dedication to excellence placed our master’s program among the best in the nation, producing outstanding advanced practice nurses to serve our communities.”

“The reason this program is successful is because of the faculty expertise and their collective risk-taking ability.”

In the U.S. News “2022 Best Nursing Schools: Master’s” list, which was released in March, the UConn School of Nursing tied for No. 27 in the nation. That is a 32-point increase from the year before, when the School was ranked No. 59. Among the New England schools on the list, UConn came in second, behind only Yale University.

Notably, the School of Nursing’s Doctor of Nursing Practice program was also ranked No. 59 last year, but tied for No. 44 on the new “2022 Best Nursing Schools: Doctor of Nursing Practice” list, for a 15-point increase.

The 220 nursing master’s programs on the rankings list were judged on four categories: quality assessment, research

activity, faculty resources, and student selectivity and program size.

Another feather in the program’s cap was the neonatal nurse practitioner concentration tying for No. 14 on U.S. News’ best online nursing master’s programs list, which was published in January. It was the UConn School of Nursing’s first time landing in the top 20 of those rankings. Last year, it tied for No. 82. It is the No. 2 online nursing master’s program in New England, ranking behind only the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

“We could not have such a successful online master’s program without the support and guidance we receive from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning,” Chyun says.

The neonatal nurse practitioner concentration for the master’s program has been delivered fully online for five years. But over the course of the 2020-2021 academic year, in partnership with CETL, the family nurse practitioner, adult gerontology acute care nurse practitioner, and adult gerontology primary care nurse practitioner concentrations all transitioned to online as well. The program also added new online nurse educator and nurse leader concentrations.

“The reason this program is successful is because of the faculty expertise and their collective risk-taking ability,” says Sandra Bellini, DNP, APRN, NNP-BC, CNE, who directs the neonatal concentration. “We entered a very competitive environment five years ago, and in five years’ time, we went from a program that was fighting to stay open to one of the five largest in the United States, and that is a function and a result of really strong faculty and also really strong students.”

In creating its online program rankings, U.S. News focused on five categories: student engagement with classmates and instructors; faculty credentials and training; opinions from



UConn MS BY THE NUMBERS

27

ranking among nursing master’s programs
in the country

2

ranking among traditional and online nursing
master’s programs in New England

14

ranking among online nursing master’s
programs in the country

6

number of master’s program concentrations
offered at the UConn School of Nursing

Source: U.S. News & World Report

academic officials in nursing; services and technologies offered; and student excellence.

For the 2021 online nursing master’s rankings, 194 programs across the country were evaluated. To be considered, the programs had to meet U.S. News’ definition of a distance education nursing program, which requires “the vast majority of required nonclinical coursework for program completion is able to be completed via distance education courses that incorporate internet-based learning technologies.”

“Moving our master’s program to online has allowed us to expand our student base, which in turn increases the number of advanced practice nurses providing care across the country,” Chyun says. “I applaud our faculty and students for these well-deserved distinctions and know they will only continue to impress.” U

To learn more about the School of Nursing’s master’s program, visit nursing.online.uconn.edu.

New Graduate Certificate Teaches the Healing Art of Life Story Practice and Research

Humans are storytellers and have been for millennia.

Just as there is a skill to storytelling, there also is in facilitating and listening to those stories — helping someone reminisce or talk through their experiences. If a health care professional is trained in such skills, it can even be a form of therapy for their patients or a source of data.

That is the purpose of the School of Nursing’s new online graduate certificate program in Life Story Practice and Research. Developed in collaboration with members of UConn’s International Center for Life Story Innovations and Practice and led by Juliette Shellman, Ph.D., RN, associate

professor and director of the Center, the 12-credit program welcomed its first cohort this past summer.

“I became interested in reminiscence as an intervention through my clinical practice in long-term care and as a visiting nurse in home care,” Shellman says. “Whenever I asked my patients to recall memories, I observed a transformation take place. Talking about their memories and having someone listen took away the pain of their present situation.”

Reminiscence, or recalling past experiences, is a popular life story practice that can be conducted silently or out loud with others. But students in the program also learn other techniques,

such as guided autobiography, personal history, and memoir writing, from faculty around the globe.

“This program will prepare graduate students and professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to conduct life story interventions or programs with individuals, families, and groups,” Shellman says.

“This program will prepare graduate students and professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to conduct life story interventions or programs with individuals, families, and groups.”

The program consists of two three-credit and three two-credit courses, some of which are taught by School of Nursing faculty members, including Shellman; Millicent Malcom, DNP, GNP-BC, AGPCNP-BC, APRN, FAANP; Thomas Long, Ph.D.; and Christine Tocchi, Ph.D., APRN, BC-GNP. Life story professionals from around the world also mentor students during their field work experiences and provide guest lectures in the courses. The certificate is designed for social workers, nurses, clinical psychologists, artists, writers, musicians, and personal and family historians.



Juliette Shellman, Ph.D., RN, second from right, leads the new online graduate certificate program.

If professionals apply life story methods effectively, a patient’s mental health and well-being can dramatically improve. Nurses and other health care workers who are trained in reminiscence and active listening also tend to be better at coping with the daily stress of caring for patients.

The new certificate program is a natural companion to UConn’s International Center for Life Story Innovations and Practice, which moved from the University of Wisconsin-

Superior to UConn in April 2019. The center brings together researchers, educators, practitioners, students, historians, and artists from around the world to promote the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities through life story techniques.

“The Covid-19 pandemic is creating the need for life story work as a therapeutic intervention,” Shellman says. “Individuals require opportunities to tell their stories and come to terms with

their experiences during the pandemic. This certificate program will prepare graduate students and professionals to meet the needs of individuals, families, and health care providers to help them heal.” **U**

To learn more about the Online Graduate Certificate in Life Story Practice and Research, visit life-story-certificate.online.uconn.edu.



New Certificate Working to Fill the Need for Skilled Alzheimer's Dementia Care

More than 6 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's dementia and, without medical intervention, the number of people living with dementia of all types is expected to rise to 14 million by the year 2060. It is a public health crisis for which treatment is limited — there is no cure, and there is a shortage of skilled professionals to care for those in need.

The UConn School of Nursing is aiming to fill this gap by launching a new online graduate certificate in Dementia Care, which began admitting students this fall.

The interdisciplinary three-semester, 12-credit fully online program — designed to help not just nurses but a broad range of health care professionals improve the care of persons living with dementia and Alzheimer's Disease — is the culmination of more than five years of work by Christine DiLeone, Ph.D., RN, an assistant clinical professor in the School of Nursing and the program coordinator for the new certificate.

"I have my own experiences with my mom with Alzheimer's, but it was in a clinical setting with nursing students that I realized we have a gap in care as I observed the students caring for a patient with dementia," DiLeone says. "She was very scared and wanted to go home; the students really did not know how to communicate with her, because it is a very different type of care."

While DiLeone used resources from the Connecticut chapter of the Alzheimer's Association to help teach her cohort of clinical students how to interact with the patient, the experience pointed her toward a greater need that she hopes the new program will help to fill.

"We are doing the health care profession such a disservice when we ask them to care for this population and we do not educate them," she says. "We have all these expectations of them, but they need to be educated. Several studies show that when you offer training and education, it is going to improve outcomes, and it is going to improve quality of life,

but we have a severe training shortage in dementia care in our country."

The new graduate certificate consists of three courses that will be offered both synchronously and asynchronously, with the first focusing on disease trajectory and management, including pathophysiology and clinical trials related to Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

The second course focuses on supporting, educating, assessing, and guiding families and caregivers of people living with dementia — a critical component of comprehensive dementia care, with some 11 million Americans currently providing unpaid care to people with Alzheimer's or other dementias.

"Two-thirds of caregivers are women, and one-third of those are daughters," says DiLeone, who conducted a study last year on the unmet needs of daughters as caregivers. "Women play an enormous role in caregiving, and they are a set of people that we really need to focus on, because they have a lot of unmet needs — emotionally, physical, medically, and financially. They need support."

The third course introduces students to common behaviors of people with dementia and teaches important skills for communicating, interacting, and providing care as well as non-pharmacological interventions.

It is a holistic approach that, in comparison to the few other programs available, provides a comprehensive approach to addressing the public health priority and growing need for dementia care education.

It is a holistic approach that, in comparison to the few other programs available, provides a comprehensive approach to addressing the public health priority and growing need for dementia care education, DiLeone says.

"It is really going to be a standout program," she says.

"The School of Nursing proudly serves the citizens of Connecticut and responds to their changing health care needs," says Dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN. "In this case, we saw an opportunity to improve care for the growing number of people with dementia and provide health care professionals with the option to diversify their skill



set. Students in the program will be exposed to innovative techniques from experts in multiple fields."

The program boasts an impressive lineup of faculty and guest presenters from the School of Nursing, UConn Health Center on Aging, the Alzheimer's Association Connecticut Chapter, Johns Hopkins University, Hartford HealthCare, and the University of Colorado.

While the new certificate originates from the School of Nursing, DiLeone says the program's interdisciplinary approach is important because nurses and other health care workers are constantly working collaboratively to address patient needs.

"It is not just nurses who are taking care of people with dementia," she says. "Social workers, physical therapists, health care administrators, occupational therapists — there are so many different professions that are caring for and coming into contact with people with this disease, and they really need to have expertise in it." **U**

For more information about the School of Nursing's online graduate certificate in Dementia Care, visit dementia-care.online.uconn.edu.

Nurse Scientists Turn to Postdoctoral Fellowships to Increase Research Skills and Prepare for Faculty Positions



The School of Nursing has made the completion of a postdoctoral fellowship a qualification for those applying for tenure-track faculty positions because it provides them with the teaching and research skills, among others, needed to succeed as researchers.

The inauguration of the journal *Nursing Research* 70 years ago provided the foundation for schools of nursing at research universities to develop doctoral programs in nursing science and to advance the evidence base for nursing practice.

And for well over the past decade lab-bench to patient bedside translational research, driven in part by genetics and genomics, have challenged nurse researchers to employ highly technical statistical and laboratory methods.

But how do doctoral students obtain these skills? Although their degree programs provide the foundation, additional postdoctoral education has become increasingly important in order to prepare nurse scientists. Newly graduated doctorally prepared nurses may undertake one to three additional years

of specialty training in a postdoctoral fellowship.

UConn School of Nursing has made the completion of a postdoctoral fellowship a qualification for those applying for tenure-track faculty positions because it provides them with the skills in grant development, technical specializations, and research management that will ensure their success as researchers.

Associate Dean for Research Xiaomei Cong, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, characterizes the benefit of a postdoctoral fellowship as building and refining the basic skills learned in a doctoral program while expanding the capabilities of the researcher.

“Preparing their publications, training a larger research team, learning how to collaborate with a multidisciplinary

team ... the postdoc prepares them to take a faculty position and sustain their program of research, successfully applying for nationally competitive external grant funding,” she says.

Ph.D. Program Director Wendy Henderson, Ph.D., MSN, CRNP, FAAN, acknowledges that a postdoc provides a huge benefit but also requires a large sacrifice.

“These positions do not usually pay well, and you are sometimes at the whims of the principal investigator or mentor,” she says. “The fellow has to contribute to the team effort while also protecting time and resources for their own program of research.”

For Louise Reagan ’14 Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC, FAANP, a postdoctoral fellowship at New York University’s Rory Meyers College of Nursing provided an immersive experience to apply the knowledge and skills acquired as a student in UConn’s Ph.D. program.

“I was the project director of a multisite National Institutes of Health R01 grant in my area of research, allowing me to hone my skills in leading a research team for application in my role as a research scientist and tenure-track faculty,” Reagan says. “Additionally, because of the mentored postdoc experience, I cultivated new relationships and fostered opportunities for future collaborations with nationally

recognized researchers for their work in designing and testing models of care for diabetes self-management education and support.”

Mallory Perry ’19 Ph.D., RN, CPN, CCRN, observes that her Postdoctoral Fellowship for Academic Diversity at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia Research Institute with Dr. Martha A.Q. Curley, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, has positively impacted her research career in several ways.

“I needed to expand my reach and explore various research methodologies more in line with my interests,” Perry says.

Although the UConn School of Nursing Ph.D. program taught her skills in genomics research, the fellowship has

Nursing postdoctoral fellowships build a stronger foundation for nurse researchers’ careers and strengthen the translational clinical science that creates new nursing knowledge and informs evidence-based practice.

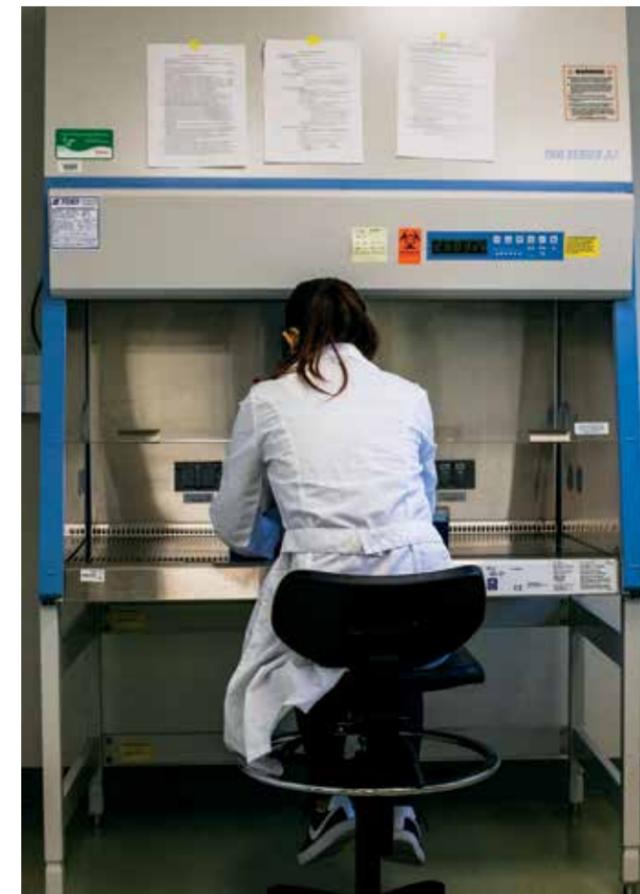
allowed her to deepen her work in pediatric critical care research, which she says is her passion and population of interest.

“My postdoctoral fellowship with Dr. Curley provided me with an affiliation at Penn Nursing and unparalleled research training, conducting NIH-funded research in critically ill children with acute respiratory failure both with and without sepsis,” Perry says.

A former United Way executive who returned to school to pursue neonatal nursing and research, Sharon Casavant ’19 Ph.D., RN, says that completing a postdoctoral fellowship was an enormous benefit personally and professionally.

“It allowed me to develop strong networks both inside and outside of the University as well as continuing my research education by completing my own study funded by the National Institute of Nursing Research and the NIH,” she says. One of the very few at UConn to receive a National Institutes of Health F32 National Research Service Award, Casavant’s fellowship expanded the horizons of nursing research.

Nursing postdoctoral fellowships build a stronger foundation for nurse researchers’ careers and strengthen the translational clinical science that creates new nursing knowledge and informs evidence-based practice. **U**



Welcoming New Faculty

We were thrilled to welcome many new faculty members over the past year. Their skills and knowledge are a great asset to our School, and they join us at a time when preparing our students to care for our communities is more important than ever. Please help us welcome them to UConn Nation.



Katherine Bernier Carney, Ph.D., RN

Alumna Katherine Bernier Carney '18 MS, '19 Ph.D. returned to UConn in August as one of the School of Nursing's newest assistant professors.

A pediatric nurse, Bernier Carney completed her doctorate as a Robert Wood Johnson Future of Nursing Scholar, examining the role of psychological stress in the development of persistent pain. She then trained as a T32 Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Utah College of Nursing, focusing on cancer, caregiving, and end-of-life care research. Before pursuing her baccalaureate degree in nursing, she received a bachelor's in public health sciences from the University of Massachusetts. Her nursing background is in pediatric acute care and hematology/oncology.

The primary goal of Bernier Carney's research is to improve the symptom care of children and adolescents receiving treatment for cancer. Her work is positioned

at the intersection of symptom science, pediatric oncology, and family-centered care. She says she is particularly interested in using patient-centered clinical data to understand symptom care patterns and develop interventions to prepare family members in providing high quality supportive care for their children across the cancer treatment trajectory.

"As an educator, my overall goal is to help students communicate more effectively, advance critical thinking skills, and develop an ethical awareness of how their choices impact patient care and public health," she says. "I enjoy mentoring undergraduate and graduate students in research projects and serve as a peer reviewer for several scientific journals."



Sharon G. Casavant, Ph.D., RN

Assistant professor Sharon G. Casavant knows what it is like to be a student at the School of Nursing. The triple Husky earned her bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. degrees from the School, but has now transitioned

to a member of the faculty.

Funded by the National Institutes of Health, Casavant's research focuses on epigenetic alterations, such as gene expression and telomere length, in preterm infants that result from repeated painful procedures and may negatively influence neurodevelopment. She is currently broadening her research focus, investigating heritability of racial stress between parents and preterm infants via telomere length. As such, her long-term research interests involve the development of a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between genes and environment in Black mother-preterm infant dyads.

"My enthusiasm for nursing science is grounded not only upon scientific research but also in teaching and mentoring," Casavant says. "I hope to impart that our knowledge of the living world is not a static list of facts to memorize but is made up of very crucial and intricate elements that keep us functional. As a teacher, I encourage future nurse scientists, health care providers, and policymakers to be excited, engaged, and motivated to learn more."

Committed to serving the nursing community both nationally and internationally, she serves as a research committee member for the National Association of Neonatal Nurses and the International Society of Nurses in Genetics. Casavant is an abstract reviewer for the Council for the Advancement of Nursing Science and Eastern Nursing Research Society. She is also a peer reviewer for the following scholarly journals: *Acta Paediatrica*, *Journal of Neonatal Nursing*, *Frontiers in Psychology*, *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, *Biological Research in Nursing*, *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, and *British Medical Journal*, *Pediatrics*.



Eileen Condon, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC

After studying and completing a postdoctoral fellowship at the Yale School of Nursing, Eileen Condon is traveling about 70 miles northeast to join the UConn faculty as an assistant professor.

Her research focuses on understanding intergenerational transmission of childhood adversity and protective factors among socioeconomically marginalized families.

"Inspired by my background as a family nurse practitioner working with underserved communities, the goal of my program of research is to identify novel targets for intervention to promote health and reduce health inequities among marginalized families," Condon says. She incorporates biological, behavioral, and genetic approaches, including examining the roles of sleep, mental health, parenting, inflammation, the gut microbiome, and gene-environment interactions in the intergenerational transmission of toxic stress.

Condon is currently funded by a K99/R00 Pathway to Independence Award from the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) of the National Institutes of Health. Her past research has also been funded by NINR, the American Nurses Foundation, the NAPNAP foundation, and numerous other foundation grants. She earned her Bachelor of Science in nursing from Villanova University in 2008, and her Master of Science and Ph.D. from the Yale School of Nursing in 2012 and 2018, respectively.



Christina Ross, Ph.D., RN

Christina Ross began her nursing education in Connecticut at the University of St. Joseph, and now returns to the Constitution State as an assistant professor at the UConn School of Nursing, following completion of her Ph.D. at the University of Virginia and a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Minnesota.

She brings a unique cultural lens to addressing health disparities based on her experience working in Guyana, Antigua, St. Kitts and Nevis, Guatemala, and South Africa. Her teaching goals aim to promote an inclusive learning environment to effectively prepare future nurses to care for diverse patient populations.

Ross' research focuses on understanding how youth-serving professionals can address adolescents' sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs, promote their positive development by using their internal and external assets, and significantly lower the rates of sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies. Her interest involves health promotion and risk reduction among vulnerable adolescents locally and globally, SRH, and health disparities. Her goal is to develop culturally sensitive trauma-informed interventions to address the elevated rates of STIs and unintended teenage pregnancy that affect youth of color and ensure vulnerable youth have equal access to quality health care.

Ross has a passion for global health and was the 2018 NIH Minority Health International Research Training Grant Scholar. She mentored undergraduate

students from the United States and South Africa and researched alcohol use and its impact on SRH and relationships among young adults in South Africa. Her most recent study examined female adolescents' perspectives regarding their SRH needs while in foster care.

NEW CLINICAL FACULTY WHO HAVE JOINED US

We were also excited to welcome several new clinical faculty members over the past year:

- **Jean Sheerin Coffey**, Ph.D., APRN, CPNP, FAAN
- **Michelle Cole**, DNP, MSN, RN, CPN
- **Laura Eiss**, MSN, RN, ACNS-BC, NPJ-BC
- **Maria Lisboa**, EdS, MSN, RN
- **Brenda McNeil**, DNP, FNP-BC, APRN
- **Denise Morris**, MSN, CMSRN
- **Jessica Palozie**, DNP, APRN, ACNP-BC
- **Amisha Parekh de Campos**, Ph.D., MPH, CHPN, RN
- **Hsinfen Tu**, MSN, RN

FACULTY PROMOTIONS

We would like to congratulate several of our faculty whose promotions were approved by the University's Board of Trustees in April:

Promotion to Professor:

- **Steven Kinsey**, Ph.D.
- **Natalie Shook**, Ph.D.

Promotion to Clinical Professor:

- **Annette Jakubisin Konicki**, Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC, FNP-BC, FAANP
- **Annette Maruca**, Ph.D., RN-BC, CNE, CCHP

Promotion to Associate Clinical Professor:

- **Marybeth Whalen**, DNP, NNP-BC, APRN

Recent Graduate Awarded Nonprovisional Patent After Leveraging Multiple Entrepreneurial Resources at UConn

Less than 5% of medical device patents awarded by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in the last 50 years are associated with a nurse. But recent School of Nursing graduate Ellen Quintana, BSN, RN, has become one of the few, as she was awarded a nonprovisional patent for her ReduSeal system this spring.

The dispensing technology works with a standard box of disposable gloves to help reduce the number of gloves that comes out each time you pull from the box. It cuts down on glove waste and cost, which have been growing expenses for health care providers recently due to Covid-19 precautions. The invention even saves time for busy nurses and health care professionals.

“This issue first came to my attention during a lab for one of my chemistry classes my first year at UConn,” says Quintana ’21 (NUR). “No one could get just one glove out of the box, and there were gloves everywhere. We were told that once they fell out, we could not put them back; it was really wasteful.”

At that time, she turned to her nursing professors and mentors for guidance: Did they encounter this problem in their workplaces as well?

“Professor Carrie Eaton, who at the time was a graduate assistant with the Nursing Learning Community, told me her workplace just placed garbage cans under the glove boxes that hang on the wall to catch any extras,” Quintana says. “That got me thinking, why don’t we stop this problem from happening and how could I redesign the glove box?”

She had no idea that her inquisitive spirit would lead her down a path of innovation for the entirety of her time at UConn, introducing her to many of the University’s resources and opportunities for entrepreneurs along the way.

Outside of class, Quintana connected with School of Nursing alumna and then-adjunct professor Christine Meehan ’74 MA, BSN, RN, to cultivate her idea and prototype. Meehan is a health care entrepreneur, angel investor, and led the School’s innovation activities at the time. She encouraged

Quintana to apply for UConn’s IDEA Grant Program, which awards funding to support student-designed and student-led projects. To Quintana’s surprise, she was one of the projects selected that year.

“I did not expect to get that as a first-year student,” Quintana says. “I knew I could not tackle this project alone, so over that summer, I created an interdisciplinary team.”

In partnership with the School of Engineering’s Senior Design program, Ellen was able to bring her vision to life with the first generation of prototypes, which she subjects to what she calls “pull tests” — seeing how many gloves come out of the box at once with the prototype in place. Eaton, Ph.D., MSN, RNC-OB, C-EFM, CHSE, who then directed the School of Nursing’s Clinical Simulation Learning Center after finishing her Ph.D., helped Quintana set up time in the simulation labs to conduct her pull tests.

As with most inventions, each prototype and round of testing led to adjustments, new prototypes, and more testing. Quintana added an independent study to her course schedule every semester since the spring of her first year, allowing her to have time dedicated to developing her invention. It also provided structure for her innovation activities and created mentoring relationships with faculty.

In 2019, Quintana met two people who would be an important part of the rest of her innovation journey. In fall 2018, the School of Nursing had welcomed Tiffany Kelley, Ph.D., MBA, RN-BC, to its faculty as the Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation Visiting Professor for Innovations and New Knowledge in Nursing. She joined Meehan in spring 2019 in guiding Quintana’s work and independent study.

Kelley hosted a Health Innovation Weekend that fall for



Ellen Quintana, BSN, RN, received an early graduation gift from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office when she found out she had been awarded a patent for her ReduSeal system in March.

both nursing and non-nursing students and faculty. Over the course of that weekend, Quintana met Kelsey MarcAurele ’22 (NUR).

“I noticed Kelsey and Ellen sitting next to each other all weekend,” Kelley says. “A few months later, when Ellen wanted to apply for a VentureWell E-Team grant, she was in need of adding a team member to the application. I immediately thought of Kelsey because of that weekend and watching their interactions.”

MarcAurele had transferred to UConn that fall, drawn to its rich research environment, and attended the Health Innovation Weekend because it fit her interests and she wanted to meet other students.

“I always knew that I wanted to do something in research and innovation,” MarcAurele says. “It was a little overwhelming joining Ellen’s project in the middle, because Ellen has very big ideas. Now I understand where her brain goes and, over time, we were able to get to know each other better.”

The two students got to work applying for the VentureWell grant, which ended up awarding them \$5,000, and then set their sights on applying for UConn’s Innovation Quest, which encourages student innovators to pursue their ideas and get funded for it, in spring 2020.

“There is a balance that I have seen emerge between Kelsey and Ellen,” Kelley says. “Kelsey has taken on a project manager role, staying abreast of milestones and deadlines while Ellen has been the decision-maker on design and her overall vision for next steps. They have worked well together.”

MarcAurele saw a flyer at a bus stop advertising Innovation Quest, a competition for students across the University’s campus, the same day that Kelley and Quintana also happened to be discussing it.

“I said to Ellen, ‘Maybe we should just do it then,’” MarcAurele says. “‘You heard about it, I saw it the same day, it is a sign, we should just go for it.’ And we ended up placing second, which was very unexpected. It was a very big blessing.”

That second-place finish at Innovation Quest came with \$10,000 to put toward ReduSeal. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic that emerged that spring, Quintana and MarcAurele kept pushing themselves to refine and perfect the invention. They realized it was more useful than ever before, as the pandemic required more and more health care and non-health care workers to depend on gloves to keep them safe.

Quintana created a limited liability company, called RN Efficiently, in summer 2020, and she and MarcAurele applied

for the Johnson & Johnson Nurses Innovate Quickfire Challenge that fall, becoming one of 10 finalists invited to pitch their product.

But March 2021 brought the biggest success of all: Quintana being awarded a nonprovisional patent for ReduSeal.

Back in summer 2018, Meehan had introduced Quintana to the Intellectual Property Clinic at UConn Law, which guides Connecticut-based entrepreneurs through intellectual property filing at a reduced rate. With the clinic's help and advice, Quintana skipped the usual first step of applying for the temporary provisional patent and instead filed for the standard nonprovisional patent in spring 2019.

Cusson Student Healthcare Innovations Award. Named for the School's eighth dean, who served from 2011 to 2016 and positioned the School as a leader in innovation, the award honors a student who has shown demonstrable commitment and interest in being an example for leading health care innovation through the School of Nursing.

"Ellen leveraged many resources across UConn's ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship," Kelley says. "Her progression over the years is a good example of how to integrate what UConn has to offer students who identify a problem they want to solve and advance it during their studies. Additionally, the educational experience can only be a benefit to their professional development and growth

"Nurses should not have to clean up gloves."



Two years later, she received an early graduation gift from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office when she found out she had been awarded her patent. But she says it is just the beginning.

"I am looking for opportunities to license the product, now that I have intellectual property and the patent," Quintana says. "I want to strategically license the product so hospitals can save money, reduce waste, and hopefully save time for nurses. Nurses should not have to clean up gloves."

She is now working in the emergency department at Hartford Hospital, but says she wants to continue to work on ReduSeal and for it to be successful. She credits UConn for nurturing her entrepreneurship and exposing her to opportunities she may not have found elsewhere.

The School of Nursing, in turn, recognized her at commencement in May by presenting her with the Regina M.

after their time at UConn."

Quintana agrees and says a lot of what she has learned will also help her be a better nurse.

"UConn and the School of Nursing helped connect me to resources I otherwise would not have access to," she says. "This process taught me problem-solving and critical thinking skills, when experiments did not go well, or I struggled to build prototypes. I learned to have patience and how to communicate with others. I started this as a first-year student, and I have seen myself grow because I have had to learn how to reach out to people and who to reach out to with mentored support from faculty at UConn. As an ER nurse, you have to know what resources are available to help your patients and now I can be the best advocate possible for them."

A Family of Caregivers with a Passion for Health Equity: Mother, Daughter Both Graduate from the School of Nursing



of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Both are also members of the Mu chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, the International Honor Society of Nursing. You could say nursing, nursing education, and leadership are in their blood.

"Growing up, I always heard my mom's stories from the hospital and would ask her about my own injuries and illnesses," Cierra says. "As I got older, I noticed I was the one assuming a caregiver role among others my age. One of my friends got in a dirt bike accident and needed stitches, but neither she nor her mother wanted to touch the wound. So, at 12 years old I was the one doing all of her dressing changes."

"Growing up, I always heard my mom's stories from the hospital and would ask her about my own injuries and illnesses."

It is not just her mother that Cierra has as a role model — her aunt and uncle are nurses as well, and, as a teenager, she tagged along with her mother when she volunteered with the National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN).

"I was going to all these community service events with my mom, helping her teach nutritional information and the importance of exercise to second-graders in Hartford," Cierra says. "As I started to do that, I also started to see the gaps in health care and health literacy as well, and realized I wanted to become a nurse so I could help these underserved communities."

MaryAnn has been a nurse for 29 years, first joining the School of Nursing faculty in 2013. Her research focuses on how to improve health outcomes in Latinx people diagnosed with diabetes. Her doctoral dissertation is titled "Underserved Hispanics with Type 2 Diabetes: Advancing Understanding of Health Inequities." In addition to developing and implementing mentoring programs for minority nurses, nursing students, and middle and high school students interested in nursing, she has been a leader **Continued on Page 44**

Commencement this past May was one that students will never forget. After months of uncertainty, the University was able to hold ceremonies in-person, outdoors, and socially distanced at Rentschler Field at Pratt & Whitney Stadium. It made history and created unforgettable memories.

For the Brescia family, commencement was special for an additional reason: two generations received degrees as members of the School of Nursing's Class of 2021. Cierra Brescia graduated with her Bachelor of Science, while her mother, MaryAnn Perez-Brescia, received her Ph.D.

Neither woman was an ordinary student, however. Cierra received the Carolyn Ladd Widmer Undergraduate Leadership Award upon graduation, while MaryAnn is a clinical instructor at the School of Nursing and its coordinator



Health Care Innovation Students Tackle Workplace Inefficiencies Brought to Light by Covid-19

On paper, Molly Higgins, RN, and Kelsey Rynkiewicz, MS, MSHA, LAT, ATC, NREMT, may not seem that similar: Higgins is a registered nurse at Massachusetts General Hospital, while Rynkiewicz is an athletic trainer at Eastern Connecticut State University.

But both women are students in the UConn School of Nursing's Healthcare Innovation Online Graduate Certificate program and are prototyping ideas that could solve issues at their workplaces brought to light by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Historically, health care has been resistant to change," says Tiffany Kelley, Ph.D., MBA, RN-BC, the director of the program and the Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation Visiting Professor for Innovations and New Knowledge in Nursing. "However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we as an industry needed to be willing and able to change to keep people as safe as possible while continuing to deliver high-quality care."

Rynkiewicz works with varsity-level athletes, helping to evaluate, diagnose, and rehabilitate injuries and illnesses. When Covid-19 first reached Connecticut in March 2020, she was forced to work remotely just like many other

professionals. That is when a glaring issue with their workflow came to light — each athlete's rehabilitation regimen was in the athletic training facility written out on a piece of paper, which listed the exercises they were supposed to do and how often.

"At the time, it drove me nuts," says Rynkiewicz, who has master's degrees in kinesiology and health care administration and is also a third-year Ph.D. student in the College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources' Department of Kinesiology. "When Covid hit, we had to take pictures of the sheets of paper and send it to the athletes so they could do their exercises at home."

Her coursework in the Healthcare Innovation Online Graduate Certificate program helped her think of an idea to solve this inefficiency: an app.

"It would be so much easier if there was some kind of application where we can put in the exercises, supply videos of the exercises, talk with the athlete, or even video chat with the athlete — all in one place," Rynkiewicz says.

While she has a long way to go to create such an app,

Rynkiewicz says she would not have been able to take her idea even this far without the skills and processes she has learned in her Healthcare Innovation classes.

"I took the opportunity to incorporate emerging innovative solutions into the course each week to bring innovation to life for the class," Kelley says. "I wanted the students to see the emerging needs due to Covid-19, how health care professionals were responding to those needs, and most importantly, that it was possible to do things differently in health care."

"As athletic trainers, we are always innovating and being creative and trying to come up with new ways of doing things," Rynkiewicz says. "A lot of things we have talked

"This program has created a road map of how to take an idea through the process of innovation, in a step-by-step process."

about in our classes have really made me think, 'wow I could be doing so much of this at work, applying it in this way or that way.' There are so many things I have looked at differently because of that."

Higgins is no stranger to implementing innovation at work either.

When Covid-19 began to surge in spring 2020, she was able to leverage her Grab-a-Lab prototype, an innovation she began working on after she was awarded an IDEA grant at Massachusetts General Hospital in 2018.

The hospital's Innovation Team thought her idea would help with specimen collection during the pandemic and had 50 Grab-a-Lab prototypes made. With the prototypes, lab bags do not enter patients' rooms; nurses can take samples from patients and place them into the Grab-a-Lab in a way that is more efficient and prevents the bag from becoming contaminated.

"I am so glad I started the Healthcare Innovation Program when I did," Higgins says. "Shortly after the start of the program, the pandemic happened, and the importance of my invention surged. It is perfect timing to be learning more about innovation as my prototype's reach is expanding."

But she did not stop there. Higgins is also now developing a prototype to help decrease patient isolation and increase family connections during the pandemic.

Working on the bone marrow transplant unit for the past 13 years, Higgins has witnessed many times when patients and families cannot be together, and how difficult it is for both parties.

"Even though the idea came as a result of Covid-19, it is a problem anyway," she says. "Covid-19 has exacerbated patient isolation through very strict visitor policies, or at certain times, a no-visitor policy. It is very important that we keep patients and families connected as much as possible."

In a way, she says, that may be the silver lining of the pandemic: industries learning how they can be more efficient and better serve others.

"Covid-19 certainly has sparked a lot of creative ways to do things," Higgins says. "It shows how the process of innovation is so important and how we need to pivot and do what is best for patients."

The Healthcare Innovation Online Graduate Certificate program is teaching Higgins, Rynkiewicz, and other UConn students like them how to do just that.

"This program has created a road map of how to take an idea through the process of innovation, in a step-by-step



process," Higgins says. "I have also learned the importance of understanding that there are no setbacks, just learning opportunities. You just have to keep moving forward."

"It is something we all need to be doing," Rynkiewicz says. "Regardless of what industry you are in, there is a need or a reason that you can innovate. Even if you do not realize you are doing it, you probably are, and this program gives you the tools."

Learn more about the Healthcare Innovation Online Graduate Certificate program at healthcareinnovation.online.uconn.edu.

2021 FACULTY AND STUDENT AWARDS GIVEN AT COMMENCEMENT

Every year during commencement in May, we honor several students for their hard work and potential impact on the field of nursing. Starting in 2020, we have also given out faculty awards, recognizing members of our faculty who went above and beyond for their students.

Carolyn Ladd Widmer Ph.D. Award

Awarded to a graduating Ph.D. student for outstanding research.

Jie Chen, Ph.D. graduate

Sigma Theta Tau Awards

Given to students whom the Mu Chapter believes will do the most to meet Sigma Theta Tau's mission, which is developing nurse leaders anywhere to improve health care everywhere.

Pornpan Srisopa, Ph.D. graduate

Jessica Lynn Palozie, DNP graduate

Lewis Head, MS graduate

Michelle Franklin, BS graduate

Josephine Dolan Award for the Scholarship of Application

Awarded to a DNP graduate for outstanding application of evidence-based practice.

Laura Lorraine McKenna, DNP graduate

Eleanor K. Gill Awards for Excellence in Clinical Practice

Awarded to graduating doctoral or master's students for excellence in clinical practice or nursing administration.

Rosemary Swanke, DNP graduate

Brett Mendez, MS graduate

Sandra Sudduth, MS graduate

Carolyn Ladd Widmer Undergraduate Leadership Award

Given to a graduating senior who has demonstrated leadership within either the School of Nursing or the state professional nursing community.

Cierra Brescia, BS graduate

Clara Williams Holistic Nurse Award

Honors a baccalaureate graduate who has demonstrated outstanding clinical skills and exceptional understanding of patients' holistic needs.

Margaret Angelo, BS graduate

Regina M. Cusson Healthcare Innovations Awards

The Regina M. Cusson Healthcare Innovations Awards are given annually at graduation to a University of Connecticut student and faculty member who have shown demonstrable commitment and interest in being an example for leading health care innovation through the School of Nursing.

Ellen Quintana, BS graduate

Ruth Lucas, Ph.D., RNC, CLS, assistant professor

John McNulty Excellence in the Scholarship of Clinical Education Award

Proud to be Professor McNulty, John believed he needed to engage the students in order for them to learn. He entertained them through his skits, drew them in through his stories from his work experience as a weekend supervisor, and always made them think through creating alliterations, plays, and sonnets.

Carrie Eaton, Ph.D., MSN, RNC-OB, C-EFM, CHSE, assistant clinical professor



Jie Chen



Pornpan Srisopa



Jessica Lynn Palozie



Michelle Franklin



Laura Lorraine McKenna



Rosemary Swanke



Brett Mendez



Cierra Brescia



Margaret Angelo



Ellen Quintana



Ruth Lucas



Carrie Eaton

Alumna Donates World War I-Era Nursing Posters, Invalid Feeders to the School



Diane Sanchez '95 MS does not just consider herself to be a collector or connoisseur. She's a steward.

A steward of a specific period of nursing history.

"During my graduate studies at UConn from 1993 to 1995, I took a nursing history course with Eleanor Herrmann," Sanchez says. "Eleanor loved nursing and history and she gave that love to me. I swooped it up!"

Now Sanchez has given that love back to the School of Nursing — in the form of 15 rare nursing posters from the 1910s and 1920s and over two dozen invalid feeders. The artifacts will be incorporated into the School's Archives of Nursing History and displayed in the Widmer Wing of Storrs Hall at a future date. The wing is also home to the well-known Dolan Collection of Nursing History.

"The School of Nursing is proud to become the new home for these important pieces of nursing history," Dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN says. "We are incredibly grateful Diane thought of us and trusts us to preserve

her collection."

Sanchez says she spent about 10 years collecting the artifacts from all over the Northeast. Her husband, Juan, spurred her hobby and research when he found a nursing poster in an antique store in Manchester, Connecticut, and brought it home.

"Most of these posters were propaganda during World War I, 1917 through 1918," Sanchez says. "They were used to change the mindset of the population in regard to the war. Before the war was declared, this country was neutral, with most of the population against joining to fight with the British and the French."

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed the pinnacle of commercial posters, both in their influence and their artistry, which were fully in evidence in World War I recruitment posters for nursing and the Red Cross. They also constitute a distinct category of artifact — ephemera — because their transitory purposes led most of them to be discarded after they were used.

Well known, of course, are the advertising posters of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec featuring the entertainers of famous nightclubs in Paris. In their time they were no more valued than a billboard is today, but they are now prized in the collections of major art museums.

As the Library of Congress explains about its collection of nearly 2,000 posters: "During World War I, the impact of the poster as a means of communication was greater than at any other time during history. The ability of posters to inspire, inform, and persuade combined with vibrant design trends in many of the participating countries to produce thousands of interesting visual works."

Although some posters employed traditional motifs (for example, the allegorical figure of Columbia or religious

iconography), the bold commercial designs rendered in Impressionist style capture our attention.

Howard Chandler Christy, creator of the "Christy girl" (as iconic as the earlier "Gibson girl"), is perhaps the best known of these artists. Meanwhile, James Montgomery Flagg designed perhaps the most famous poster of the era: the often reproduced and even more often parodied image of Uncle Sam proclaiming, "I want YOU for U.S. Army."

Although these posters were reproduced in large numbers at the time, they were considered disposable, and most were discarded after the war. Sanchez's collection, therefore, is a rare trove, representing the emergence of modern nursing as nurses transformed themselves from Victorian domestic workers to health care professionals through national service and advanced education.

Invalid feeders, and similar devices called pap boats, were used to provide fluids to infants and weakened patients before intravenous therapy was universally available. The half-open, pear-shaped



vessels have a handle at one end and a spout at the other to allow caregivers to gently administer oral nourishment and medication.

"I didn't know they existed until Eleanor brought some to class one day," Sanchez says, but her interest in them grew to the point that she researched and co-authored an article with Herrmann titled "Feeding Infants, Invalids, and the Infirm," which was published in the *Western Journal of Nursing Research* in August 1997.

Their article states: "Known to have existed as early as the 17th century, most of the vessels were produced before the turn of the 20th century. Although occasionally used as late as World War II, they are rarely used today. Consequently, both types of vessels have become sought-after collectors' items, not only for their immense variety and aesthetic appeal, but for their significance as hallmark artifacts of an era in nursing care."

Sanchez says she knew she wanted to be a nurse as early as third or fourth grade. "I wrote an essay about it," she says. "I remember I couldn't spell the word 'nurse' and had to look it up."

Sanchez began her nursing career as a licensed practical nurse at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford. She then became a registered nurse after studying at Mohegan Community College (now Three Rivers Community College) and earned her Bachelor of Science in nursing from Central Connecticut State University. When she decided to continue her education at the graduate level, she came to UConn — earning her master's in 1995 and returning for a one-year graduate certificate program from 1996 to 1997.

Although she has since retired from nursing, Sanchez carried her love for the industry through the curation of her historical collection.

"It really became a passion of mine," she says. "These posters and invalid feeders used to make me smile, but I'm a different person now. I wanted to make sure they stayed with a nurse. I'm a steward of this part of nursing history and now UConn has become the steward."

To learn more about the School of Nursing's historical collection, visit nursing.uconn.edu/archives-of-nursing-leadership.

PLANNED GIVING FOR THE UCONN SCHOOL OF NURSING

The collective gifts the School of Nursing receives annually provide essential support for scholarships, as well as our mission of caring, innovation, and advocacy in patient care. However, estate gifts can create a lasting legacy for our donors while truly transforming the lives of our nursing students and our nursing programs. Have you considered including a gift to UConn School of Nursing in your estate plans? Those who intend to support UConn with a lasting commitment are invited to join the "CLB Society."

The Charles Lewis Beach Society is the namesake of Charles Lewis Beach (college president 1908-1928). President Beach is remembered in part for his role as teacher and leader of what was, in 1908, the young Connecticut Agricultural College. He was a man of foresight and good works whose philanthropy, concern, and love for the University of Connecticut and its students extended far beyond his lifetime and created a personal legacy. Through his will, he also honored his late wife Louise by providing support for student enrichment and for the institution that was to grow into the University. Today, the Louise Crombie Beach Memorial Collection of Art and the Louise Crombie Beach Memorial Foundation, made possible through lifetime and planned gifts by President Beach, continue to enrich the lives of students and the University community alike.

In so honoring Charles Lewis Beach, we recognize those who similarly make provisions in their wills and other estate and planned gifts to The University of Connecticut Foundation Inc. for the benefit of the University.

To discuss your interests in supporting nursing research, scholarships or other areas of support at the School, please contact Becky Salustri, Director of Development for the School of Nursing, at: bsalustri@foundation.uconn.edu.



Charles Lewis Beach Society Membership Benefits

There are no dues, obligations, or solicitations to join the CLB Society. It's our way of thanking you for making a planned gift to UConn.

As a member, you will receive:

- An invitation to the annual CLB Society luncheon
- Invitations to special events and seminars
- A subscription to our newsletter

Once you inform us that you have included a gift for UConn in your plans, you will be recognized as a member of the Charles Lewis Beach Society.

For more information, visit plannedgiving.uconn.edu.

Alumna Shares Her Success Story and Why She Gives Back to UConn

On Feb. 27, the UConn Foundation hosted the Women and Philanthropy Scholarship Celebration in honor of the collective impact of its Women and Philanthropy initiative. Since 2016, UConn Women and Philanthropy has been uniting visionary women who are passionate about women's issues and committed to enabling UConn students to fulfill their dreams. Recently, W&P launched its 100 Women Giving \$100,000+ program, with Bertie Chuong '82 MS; Anne Harrington '89 (NUR); and Nancy Miner '73 (NUR), '78 MS being some of the founding supporters. To date, W&P has raised \$8 million to support 22 scholarship funds by 730 donors. Over 40 students received scholarships under the W&P umbrella for the 2020-21 academic year.

Harrington was the guest speaker at the February event, sharing her story and journey to success, what it meant to give her first six-figure gift to UConn, and the significance of joining the Women's Leadership Council:

Hi all, my name is Anne Harrington and I am a proud UConn alum. I was raised in Bristol, Connecticut, as the youngest of seven children. I was so intrigued by my mother's and sister's stories about being nurses that I followed in their footsteps and graduated from the School of Nursing in 1989. Immediately after graduation, I worked in the hospital setting for a few years before I relocated to Boston. In Boston, I obtained a position as a community health nurse for the Visiting Nurse Association of Boston and that is where I discovered my passion in nursing. I quickly moved into management as a nurse manager while pursuing my master's in public health from Boston University.

In the '90s, home care emerged as a more affordable care setting and health care organizations were motivated to create their own agencies. I took advantage of this trend and proceeded to work for two startup home care agencies. First, I worked at Winchester Hospital Home Care as director of nursing and then I worked for Mariner Post Acute Network as a home care administrator before being promoted to regional vice president of operations. It was these last two experiences and the birth of my first child that made me realize I had the desire, motivation, and skill set to start my own company.

In 1999, as I was pregnant with my second child — who I am proud to say is a junior accounting major today at UConn — I came across an opportunity that presented itself through my role as regional vice president at Mariner. The company that would eventually become one of my biggest competitors was asking one of my home care agencies to do nurse assessments for them for large long-term care insurance companies. While it was not a huge revenue opportunity for my home care agency, the idea

and concept intrigued me to research further. My research and own desire to take a risk with starting a business convinced me to make the jump.

I cofounded Long Term Solutions in 1999 with a nursing colleague that possessed the same philosophy and work ethic that I did. Long Term Solutions is a national care coordination company that provides nurse assessments and ongoing elder care coordination primarily in the long-term care insurance industry. We grew the company from our basements to becoming a leader in our space. In 2016, we successfully sold the business to a public home health care company. I remained involved for the transition and then retired from LTS later that year.

Since 2016, I have managed my family; a few investments in health care companies, commercial and residential real estate; and, most proudly, have become more involved with the University of Connecticut. As I settled into life after the sale of my business, I needed to do estate planning and was passionate about giving back to the organizations that helped mentor me and drive me toward success. UConn was at the forefront of the list of organizations that shaped me. I was beyond honored to receive the Eleanor K. Gill Outstanding Alumni Award for Clinical Excellence in Nursing in 2013. I was nominated for this award by my nephew Michael Grenier '11 (BUS). I was humbled by Michael's nomination and the fact that he, too, was a proud alum looking for ways to give back to the University. It reintroduced me to the outstanding University that I was so proud to have attended. I was utterly impressed with the commitment of the University to the School of Nursing. The addition of the simulation labs and lecture halls to Storrs Hall left an impressive mark on me.

“I was determined to give back to UConn and when I made my first sizable donation and signed on the dotted line, I had a tear of joy and pride in my eye.”

— Anne Harrington

As a typical broke, struggling college student, I was always concerned about being able to afford the crappy Busch light beer at Ted's during Friday happy hour. Thirty years later, I came to the point in my life when I could buy everyone at Ted's a crappy Busch light beer. That journey was not easy, it took a lot of hard work, endless hours, and self-determination. I came to realize that it was my time at the University of Connecticut that shaped me into what I have become. UConn was and continues to be about excellence and nothing less.

I will always remember my first clinical experience at UConn. We were at New Britain General Hospital as young junior nursing students, and my clinical instructor Christina Turnbull made sure we knew everything about our patient and especially the medications we were to administer to them. As we nervously studied and quizzed each other, a staff nurse came up and said “Wow, I do not even know half the things I give to patients.” Those comments bothered me but made me proud of the quality of my UConn education and motivated me to be the best nurse. The comments still ring true to this day: be the best, be prepared, and strive for excellence. That is what this University stands for.

I, like many students, carried student loans and worked part-time throughout college. The ability for me to make a difference to current and future students and ease their financial burden is so rewarding. I was determined to give back to UConn and when I made my first sizable donation and signed on the dotted

line, I had a tear of joy and pride in my eye. Investing in the next generation of successful UConn women just feels so good.

When I was approached by Becky Salustri to join Women and Philanthropy, I pondered the idea for a while. When I was young and asked my parents for money, they certainly helped me but more importantly they taught me the value of working hard for what I wanted and not to rely on them or others. I want my donation to do the same: help plant the seed to spur students with strong ambitions and work ethics to pursue a career in nursing and leave their imprint on an ever-changing industry.

I did some research on the organization and realized what an exciting opportunity this would be — engaging with other woman philanthropists to support an institution that has given so much to each of us. Organizations do not thrive unless you have the participation and support from those that have benefited. I am committed to the drive and the mission of Woman and Philanthropy. I hope my story, success, and drive can continue to persuade UConn women to contribute to this important cause. I am completely committed to this endeavor because with numbers we grow as an organization.

I would be remiss without thanking the University, especially Becky Salustri, Colby Plaskowitz, Dean Deborah Chyun and the UConn Foundation for including me in this amazing effort. Go Huskies!

2020 Faculty and Student Publications

Advanced Practice and Acute Care

Conley, R. B., Adib, G., Adler, R. A., Akesson, K. E., **Alexander, I. M.**, et al. (2020). Secondary fracture prevention: Consensus clinical recommendations for a multistakeholder coalition. *Journal of Bone and Mineral Research*, 35(1), 36-52.

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What have you been up to lately?

We love to hear from our alumni and have created a Class Notes page on our website where you can submit your news to be shared with the rest of the School of Nursing community. Personal and professional news is welcome. We look forward to hearing from you! Submit your updates at: nursing.uconn.edu/alumni/alumni-news/

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A Family of Caregivers, Continued from page 33

in the New England Minority Nurse Leadership Conference and the NAHN.

It is easy to see that eradicating health inequities and giving back to the community are passions for both mother and daughter.

Cierra transferred to UConn her sophomore year — one of only three transfer students accepted into the nursing major that year — and by junior year had joined the Urban Service Track/AHEC Scholars Program. She also became a student member of the local NAHN chapter.

"I loved Urban Service Track because we were able to give back to the community through service events and health fairs," Cierra says. "We were educating these groups of people, but we were also educating ourselves and working in interprofessional teams, with medical, dental, pharmacy, and social work students. It was a great experience and a great entryway to professional nursing."

While Cierra never had MaryAnn as an instructor, both women were there for each other throughout their years of study and will continue to do so as both look ahead to

what is next. MaryAnn is beginning her second year as the School's coordinator of diversity, equity, and inclusion, on top of her teaching responsibilities for the Certificate Entry Into Nursing program, and Cierra began working at Yale New Haven Hospital in August, with dreams of eventually becoming a travel nurse and earning her own Ph.D.

Through it all, they are each other's biggest cheerleaders.

"I do not think there is anybody who has more of a passion for giving back and being equitable," Cierra says of MaryAnn. "Every single time we were running errands as kids, if someone ever needed anything, we were always the ones providing for them. My mom always gave back, always provided equal care for everyone that she could."

And MaryAnn could not be prouder of her daughter.

"As a parent, you always want the best for your child," she says. "You want them to be a better version of yourself and you want to provide every opportunity you can for them. I can truly say Cierra has done that: She has excelled in her academics and has a bright future ahead of her. She will be a great nurse and I am so very proud of her."

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