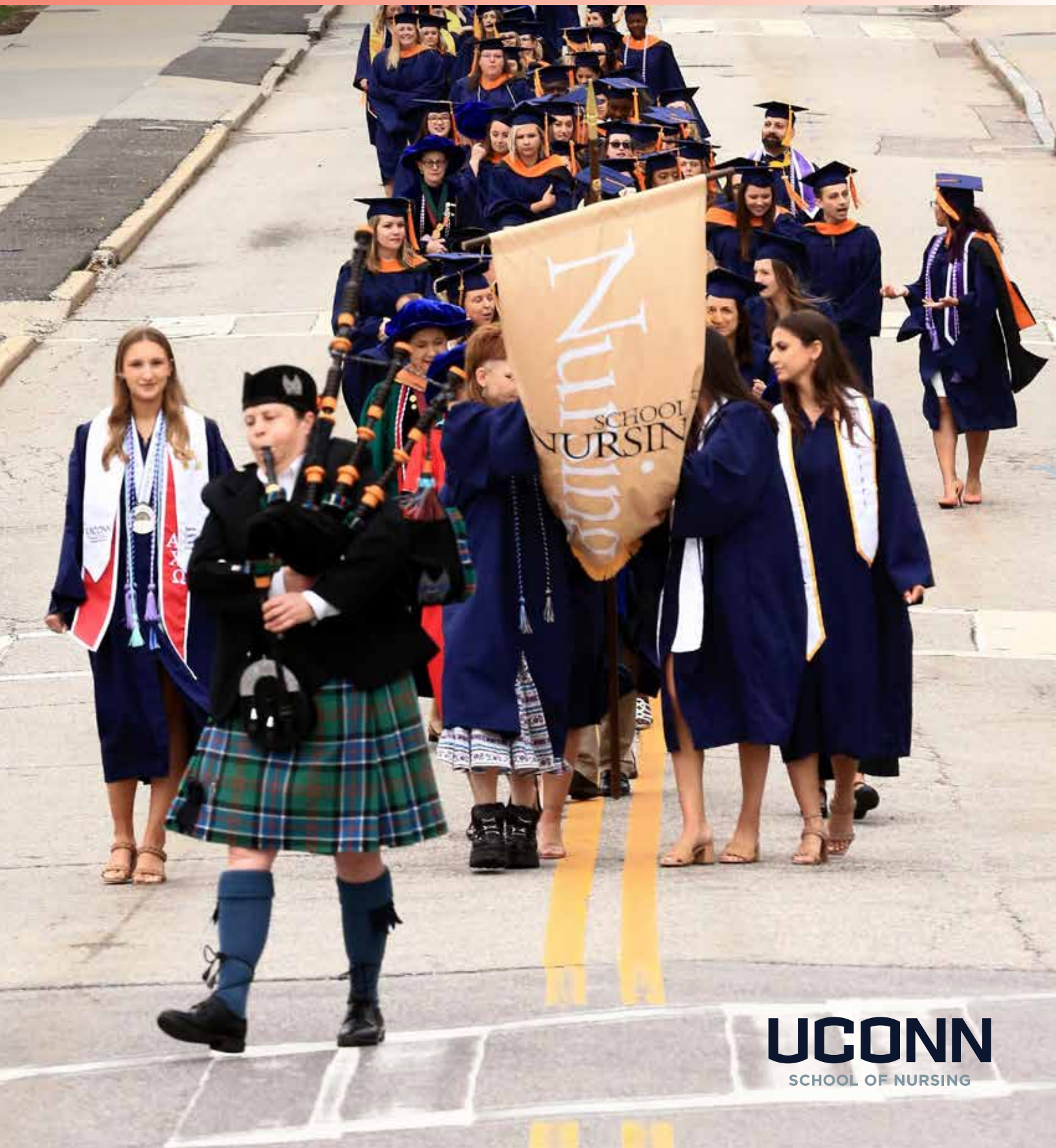


# Unison

FALL 2022 | VOLUME 21



**UConn**  
SCHOOL OF NURSING

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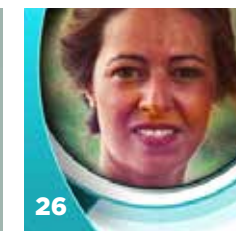
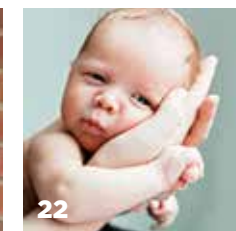
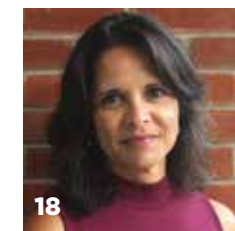
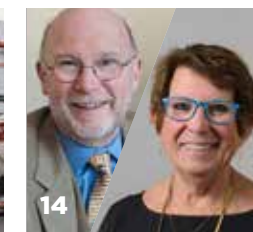
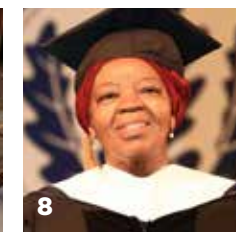
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Cover image: The UConn School of Nursing Class of 2022 processes down Glenbrook Road in Storrs on May 7, toward the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts for the School's annual Commencement. The graduates and faculty are led by bagpiper Tabitha Heavner.



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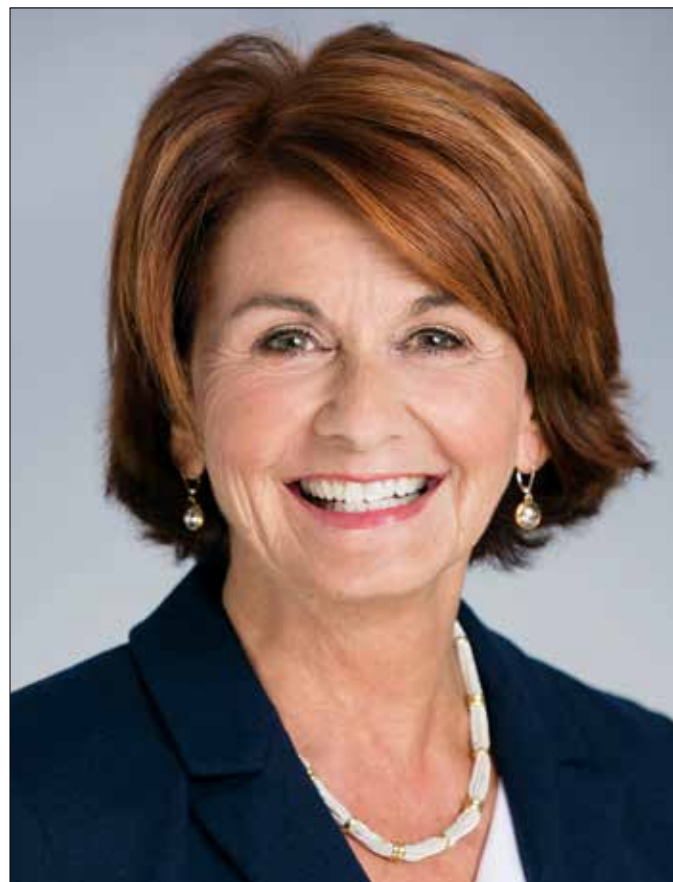
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## Marching Forward, Reflecting Back



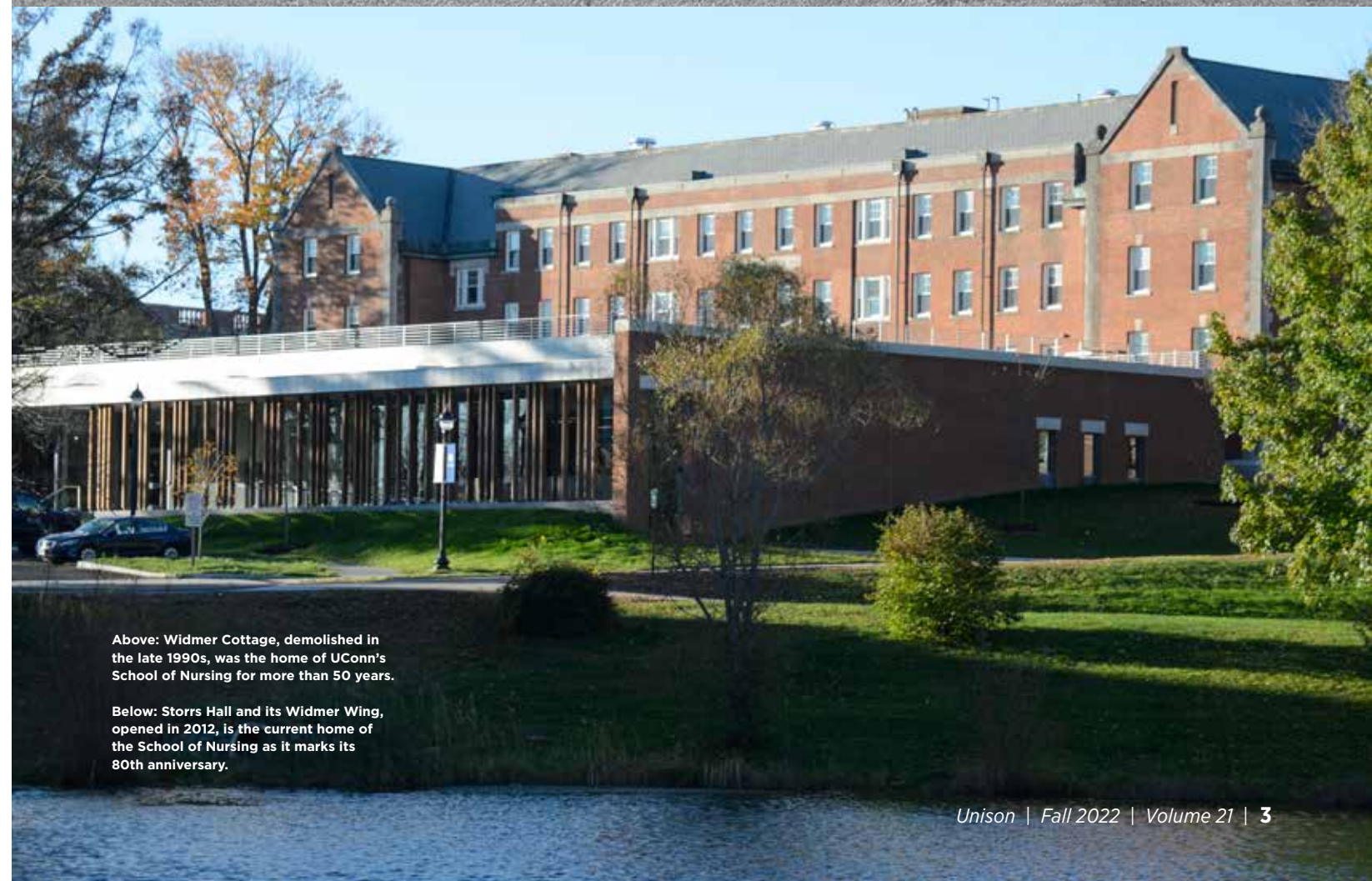
Our cover image nicely captures the spirit of Commencement 2022, our first in person at the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts since 2019. While the past two years have presented many challenges, the students, faculty, and staff have never fallen out of step or missed a beat. As you can see from the stories on the following pages, we have engaged with the community; strengthened our relationships with our clinical partners; and expanded our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. In the face of a nursing faculty shortage, we continue to attract exceptionally strong clinical and research faculty, not to mention students, with our largest-ever incoming class of 147 first-year students from our largest-ever applicant pool of 2,497 candidates!

Progress demands that while looking forward, we honor and learn from the past. In May, we were finally able to honor honorary degree recipient Sheila Tlou, whose leadership yielded near universal uptake of HIV medications resulting in a decline of mother-to-child transmission and maternal mortality across Africa, and Vernetta Townsend, recipient of our 2020 Carolyn Ladd Widmer Outstanding Alumni Award for Leadership in Nursing, who also shared their wisdom with our students during the graduation ceremony. We marked the 80th

anniversary of the School of Nursing and the 10th anniversary of the Widmer Wing, as well as celebrated Dr. Tlou, Ms. Townsend, and two retiring faculty members who have been so instrumental in the life of the School, E. Carol Polifroni and Thomas Long, at a reception in early May. We were especially honored to have Founding Dean Carolyn Ladd Widmer's son Eric and his wife Meera Viswanathan with us for this event. I hope that Dean Widmer would be happy to see where the School is today with strong undergraduate and accelerated programs, highly ranked master's and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs, and a highly competitive Ph.D. program.

As I enter the fifth and final year of my deanship, I know that much work remains for us and the next dean who will follow me. Yet, I am fully confident that, despite many obstacles, we have not strayed from the path set out for us 80 years ago by Dean Widmer. The brilliance of our students, the leadership of our faculty, and the dedication of our staff will surely guide us through the tremendous challenges facing nursing, nursing education, and health care delivery.

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



Above: Widmer Cottage, demolished in the late 1990s, was the home of UConn's School of Nursing for more than 50 years.

Below: Storrs Hall and its Widmer Wing, opened in 2012, is the current home of the School of Nursing as it marks its 80th anniversary.

# Indoor Air Quality Initiative Builds Air Purifiers to Stop Spread of Covid-19 in Public Schools

**C**ovid-19 transmits more easily in overcrowded and poorly ventilated places. To address this, the School of Nursing has united with UConn Health and other groups in the UConn community to create the Indoor Air Quality Initiative, building inexpensive do-it-yourself air purifiers as part of a project to improve community health in local elementary schools, homeless shelters, and beyond.

The new initiative was spearheaded by School of Nursing alumna and neuroimmunology nurse practitioner Marina A. Creed '17 MS, APRN, FNP-BC, MSCN, who works at UConn Health's Multiple Sclerosis Center, and her friend and colleague Sarah Laskowski of The Jackson Laboratory. It brings together the schools of Nursing, Engineering, and Medicine; the Department of Public Health Sciences; and the Connecticut Area Health Education Center Network in a multipronged, community-involved approach to mitigate the risk of Covid-19.

Among other strategies, the initiative is building and distributing the "Corsi-Rosenthal Box" to help stop the spread of Covid-19 and other viruses such as influenza. The boxes remove 90% of virus-carrying aerosols from the air and are also effective against dust and allergens.

With just about 30 minutes of an assembler's time and \$60 worth of supplies including a box fan, high-quality air filters, cardboard, and duct tape, these devices drastically reduce Covid-carrying aerosols, providing comparable filtration capabilities to professionally manufactured portable HEPA filters.

"As mask mandates are removed, this type of air filtration will become increasingly more important," says School of Nursing Dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN.

The air purifier is named after its inventors, Richard Corsi and Jim Rosenthal, who created it in August 2020. Corsi is an environmental engineer and the dean of engineering at the University of California, Davis; Rosenthal is the chairman and CEO of Tex-Air Filters.



## FEATURE STORY

“Cleaner air will protect educators, students, and families,” Creed says. “This DIY portable air cleaner is a low-cost, evidence-based intervention that immediately improves indoor air quality.” She is concerned about her patients who are educators, paraprofessionals, and parents, and both she and Laskowski have children in public schools. “My hope is that we can help make schools one of the safest places in the community, and by extension, better protect my patients, many of whom are immunocompromised.”

After contacting several school districts for the first 100-unit pilot program in December 2021, West Hartford Public Schools volunteered to deploy the units to their cafeterias. The next 100 units in the pilot program were built by undergraduate engineering students as part of their Foundations of Engineering class and were deployed in February to Coventry Public Schools, where they were utilized in cafeterias, classrooms, and other public spaces throughout the district.

In March, Creed and School of Nursing associate clinical professor Michelle Cole, DNP, MSN, RN, CPN, hosted a box-a-thon at Storrs Hall. Dozens of nursing students, as well as some from other UConn departments, spent a few hours on a Saturday building 100 of the do-it-yourself air purifiers, which were also delivered to Coventry Public Schools.

The boxes, which use about the same amount of electricity as a single lightbulb, can be an affordable intervention to improve air quality in almost any space in any school. Each box can last up to six months before the air filters need to be replaced.

“This is a nurse-led initiative that came from the point of patient care,” says former School of Nursing Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Angela Starkweather, Ph.D., ACNP-BC, FAANP, FAAN. “This is about the whole connection we have with the community. An infection could spread from the patient setting to the community, and vice versa.” Mitigating that risk using these inexpensive air filters protects children, vulnerable patients, and the broader community, Starkweather says.

“This is interventional public health in action,” says Jaime Imitola, MD, director of the UConn Health MS Center. “It is impressive what the UConn community can do to rally toward a worthy cause.” **U**



# Sheila Dinotshe Tlou Receives Honorary Doctorate at Commencement

Few have more fully exemplified the School of Nursing's mission of advancing the health of individuals, communities, and systems, both locally and globally, than Sheila Dinotshe Tlou, Ph.D., RN. As co-chair of Nursing Now, a global campaign of the International Council of Nurses and the World Health Organization, she has raised the profile and status of nursing worldwide and impacted the health and well-being of the world.

UConn School of Nursing was honored to recognize Tlou at commencement on May 7. She was originally scheduled to speak to the Class of 2020 but was unable to make the trip from Botswana until this year. Tlou received the Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, in recognition of her caring, innovation, and advocacy on behalf of the citizens of the world.

"This is the 38th award I have received in my lifetime, but it will be the most memorable because it signifies a recognition by colleagues that clearly says, 'You are one of us, we value the work that you have done and are continuing to do,'" Tlou said.

After receiving a Ph.D. in Nursing from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1990, Tlou shared her knowledge as professor and head of the University of Botswana School of Nursing, and director of the WHO Collaborating Centre in Primary Health Care. Nationally, she advocated for the health of the Republic of Botswana's citizens as a specially elected member of Parliament and as a cabinet member as the first health professional and nurse Minister of Health. Her leadership yielded near universal uptake of medications resulting in a decline of mother-to-child transmission of HIV from 29% to 8%, and maternal mortality due to AIDS

decreased from 30% to 10%. Her program became the international standard for the treatment of HIV/AIDS among women. Furthermore, Tlou's scholarship enabled women to negotiate with their partners for safer sex and reduced the stigma of AIDS.

Tlou's leadership and political advocacy provided a high-quality sustainable AIDS response in 21 African countries and was instrumental in the formation of advocacy bodies such as The Pan-African Positive Women's Coalition and the High-Level Task Force on Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV in Africa, to name but a few.

Her continued efforts in HIV prevention, treatment, and support as co-chair of the United Nations Global HIV Prevention Coalition and of the Nursing Now Global Campaign; the United Nations Eminent Person for Women, Girls, and HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa; and the International Council of Nurses Goodwill Ambassador for Girl Child Education serve as a model of caring, innovation, and advocacy.

Tlou's honors are too numerous to list, but notably include the International Red Cross Society's prestigious Florence Nightingale Medal, which is awarded biennially to exceptionally qualified nurses around the world who have distinguished themselves in peace or war by exemplary services or a creative or pioneering spirit in the name of public health or nursing education. The medal is the highest international distinction a nurse can receive, embodying the values of humanity, charity, bravery, and selfless dedication displayed by Nightingale. **U**



# Partnership with Connecticut Children's Promotes Faculty Research and Advances Pediatric Care



Many people know of the natural partnership that exists between UConn School of Nursing and UConn Health. Most are probably not aware, however, of the decade-long collaboration forged between the School and Connecticut Children's.

As early as 2008, nursing faculty who were conducting research into health issues concerning children and infants were reaching out to physicians at the children's hospital to recruit study participants. The partnership at that time was informal, with faculty directly contacting nurses and doctors they thought would be interested in collaborating.

Nurse researcher Jacqueline McGrath, Ph.D., RN, FNAP, FAAN, was hired to a dual appointment in 2012 as professor in the School of Nursing and director of nursing research at Connecticut Children's, creating a more official link between the two institutions. In fact, part of McGrath's responsibilities was to increase and promote collaboration. In 2018, Connecticut Children's hired nurse scientist Katherine A. Hinderer, Ph.D., RN, CNE, NEA-BC, to lead its nursing research, a position she still holds today. Hinderer and former School of Nursing faculty member Xiaomei Cong, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, helped usher in the next phase of the partnership.

"We as an organization committed to supporting nursing excellence and part of that was growing our nursing research and evidence-based practice," Hinderer says. "Jackie McGrath and former chief nursing officer Cheryl Hoey, MBA, BSN, RN, at Connecticut Children's built the Institute for Nursing Research and Evidence-Based Practice. This established an infrastructure for nursing research at Children's and developed a stronger mechanism for nurse scientist faculty from UConn to work with teams at Children's."

In addition to the Institute for Nursing Research and Evidence-Based Practice, the Research Institute at Connecticut Children's, launched in 2021, provides additional collaborative opportunities and support to advance nursing science.

Cong and School of Nursing assistant professor Sharon Casavant '15 (NUR), '18 MS, '19 Ph.D. were two of the first to conduct studies at Connecticut Children's that were funded by the National Institutes of Health. Cong's study, which began in 2009, focused on how kangaroo care—a method

The partnership between UConn School of Nursing and Connecticut Children's, pictured at left, started more than a decade ago and benefits researchers, graduate students, and undergraduate students.

of holding newborns—can alleviate some of the pain and stress neonates experience after certain procedures. Casavant conducted her research during her postdoctoral fellowship at UConn, focusing on the effects those same painful procedures have on preterm infants at the genetic level.

She is just one of several UConn School of Nursing alumni who continued to have a research relationship with Connecticut Children’s after graduation. Carrie-Ellen Briere ’14 Ph.D., RN, CLC, who remained at UConn until 2017 for her postdoctoral work, was also a nurse scientist at Connecticut Children’s until 2017, when she began an academic appointment at University of Massachusetts Amherst. Briere rejoined Children’s in 2022 as a per-diem nurse scientist while maintaining her UMass appointment.

**“We know there are many opportunities for growth in pediatric research and a need to advance the science. The vast majority of research conducted focuses on adults, and this work does not just translate to kids.”**

— *Katherine A. Hinderer, Ph.D., RN, CNE, NEA-BC*

In the past two years, UConn School of Nursing has hired several new faculty members who specialize in pediatric research: Eileen Carter, Ph.D., RN, in 2020; Casavant, Katherine Bernier Carney ’18 MS, ’19 Ph.D., RN, Eileen Condon, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC, and Christina Ross, Ph.D., RN, in 2021; and Mallory Perry-Eaddy ’14 (NUR), ’17 MS, ’19 Ph.D. in August. Hinderer says she appreciates having other nursing research experts to connect with and help grow their program at Connecticut Children’s.

“I am looking forward to this next generation of nurse scientists who are joining the School of Nursing that we can partner and collaborate with,” she says. “This gives us the opportunity to benefit from their expertise and knowledge, allowing our clinical nurses to participate in these high-quality nursing studies and think about the contribution nursing can make to science.”

UConn School of Nursing has built a strong roster of researchers specializing in maternal and child health over the years and Cong says it has helped recruit new faculty. Several of the newest faculty members presented their research to staff at Connecticut Children’s during a virtual

nursing grand rounds in May: “Promoting Health Equity and Health Outcomes for Children and Families through Multidisciplinary Approach.”

Condon’s research focuses on how caregivers’ adverse childhood experiences and protective factors are passed down through generations with the hope of improving health outcomes for caregivers and children. She shared information about her latest study, which seeks to understand the connections between stress, sleep, and child health and behavior. Casavant showcased her research into the length of telomeres—end caps on chromosomes—in preterm infants and if there is a correlation to the stress the infants inherit from their parents.

Ross’ program of research promotes sexual reproductive health and sexual self-efficacy among female African American adolescents who live in foster care. Her future research will help develop a mobile app geared toward those adolescents. She told the audience at the grand rounds that the app will be culturally sensitive and trauma-informed and will feature information, games, and other activities related to sexual health, so the adolescents feel empowered to address their needs. Carter shared information about how innovative partnerships can advance the profession of nursing and improve patient care. Her current research focuses on how unconfirmed penicillin allergies in children can lead to greater resistance to other antibiotics.

Hinderer says several clinical nurses at Connecticut Children’s have expressed interest in getting involved in research since the grand rounds presentation. She hopes the continued exposure to research, whether UConn’s or other institutions’, will inspire nurses to earn advanced degrees and become researchers themselves. Bernier Carney and Perry-Eaddy were clinical nurses at Connecticut Children’s when they completed their doctorates and Hinderer hopes more will follow in their footsteps.

“We know there are many opportunities for growth in pediatric research and a need to advance the science. The vast majority of research conducted focuses on adults, and this work does not just translate to kids,” Hinderer says. “To have the opportunity for these expert faculty who are pediatric nurse researchers to partner with us and conduct their research at Connecticut Children’s is phenomenal.”

Both sides hope the partnership will continue to grow as more faculty join the UConn School of Nursing. Cong says when she is interviewing potential faculty members,

they always ask about the research environment and what collaborations are available.

“My vision is that five years from now we will have an increasingly robust program of nursing research that really highlights the contributions that nurses make to science,” Hinderer says.

In the end, the stronger the partnership and collaboration the better care will be for Connecticut Children’s patients and families and potentially other pediatric patients across the country.

“The ultimate goal of all this research is to produce the best clinical outcomes for children and children’s health care,” says Sarah Matney, MSOL, BSN, RN, CENP, CPON, who is the chief nursing officer and senior vice president of clinical operations at Connecticut Children’s.

She notes that the partnership goes beyond research faculty and graduate students, but also involves UConn School of Nursing undergraduate students, who complete clinical hours or capstone projects at the hospital.

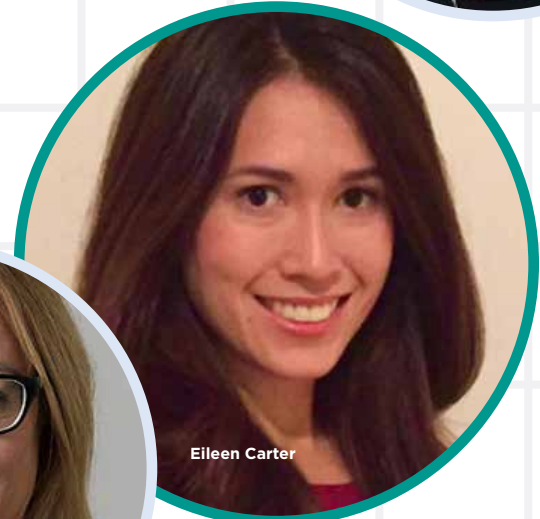
“As student nurses complete clinical hours here, we begin to build the hunger for that commitment to improving care early in their careers,” Matney says. “It has an overflow effect directly to patients and families and the future of nursing in general.” **U**



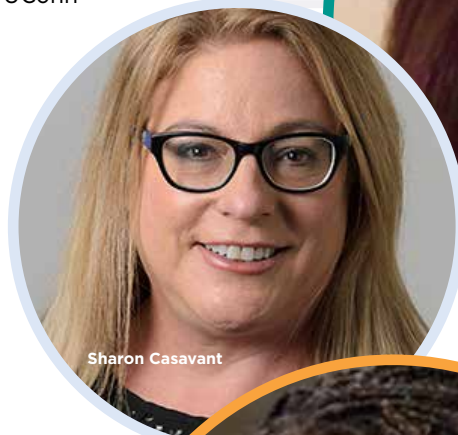
Christina Ross



Katherine Bernier Carney



Eileen Carter



Sharon Casavant



Mallory Perry-Eaddy



Eileen Condon



## E. Carol Polifroni and Thomas Long Retire from the School of Nursing

Beloved School of Nursing faculty members E. Carol Polifroni, Ed.D., CNE, RN, NEA-BC, ANEF, and Thomas Long, Ph.D., retired at the end of the spring 2022 semester. Though they had different journeys at the School and have different areas of expertise, both agree they will miss their students the most.

“I know I speak for everyone at the School of Nursing when I say that we

will miss Dr. Polifroni and Dr. Long immensely,” says Dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN. “In their decades of service to the School, they have influenced everything from our academic programs to our School culture and student services. I know many alumni look back on their mentorship fondly and our current students will miss dropping by their offices for advice or to chat.”

“There is that expression that, if you

love what you do you never go to work, and I think that is true,” Polifroni says. “That really captures my 47 years at UConn.”

A clinical nurse specialist, Polifroni has a doctorate in education, curriculum theory and development, as well as higher education administration. Her research skills include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods with coursework in all areas. She has received

more than \$7.5 million in external grants over the course of her career. More recently, she was the inaugural director of the UConn Office of Clinical Placement Coordination, and she directed the UConn Office of Public Engagement for three years, overseeing an extension of the Carnegie classification as a community engaged university and increasing service-learning courses by 200%.

**“The depth and breadth of Carol’s commitment to the School of Nursing, the University, and to the nursing profession in Connecticut is remarkable.”**

– Thomas Long, Ph.D.

She joined the University in 1975, when the School of Nursing still operated out of the original Widmer Building, lovingly called “the cottage.”

“It was a whole different world,” she says. “There were not many baccalaureate-prepared nurses, let alone those with master’s or doctoral degrees.”

In the years since, she has made a lasting impact on the School, the University, the state, and the international arena of nursing with her work on the philosophy of science. In the 1980s, Polifroni taught courses in the nursing administrator master’s track, but also served as associate dean for academics for seven years. Around that same time, she was also the president of the Connecticut Nurses Association, helping to introduce Connecticut’s law that allows advanced practice registered

nurses to practice in the state, and hiring the CNA’s first lobbyist.

While Polifroni served as interim dean three times throughout her UConn career and was dean from 2016 to 2018, she says her favorite milestones are helping to establish the Ph.D. program in 1994 and create the accelerated, second-degree Master’s Entry into Nursing (now Certificate Entry into Nursing) program in 2003.

“Up until that time, we were 100% dependent on funding from the University,” Polifroni recalls. “Once we created the CEIN program, in the way that I created it, it was major financial revenue for the School. It changed the number of faculty we were able to hire and the visibility of the School. We were the only other nursing school in the state besides Yale to offer such a program at that time.”

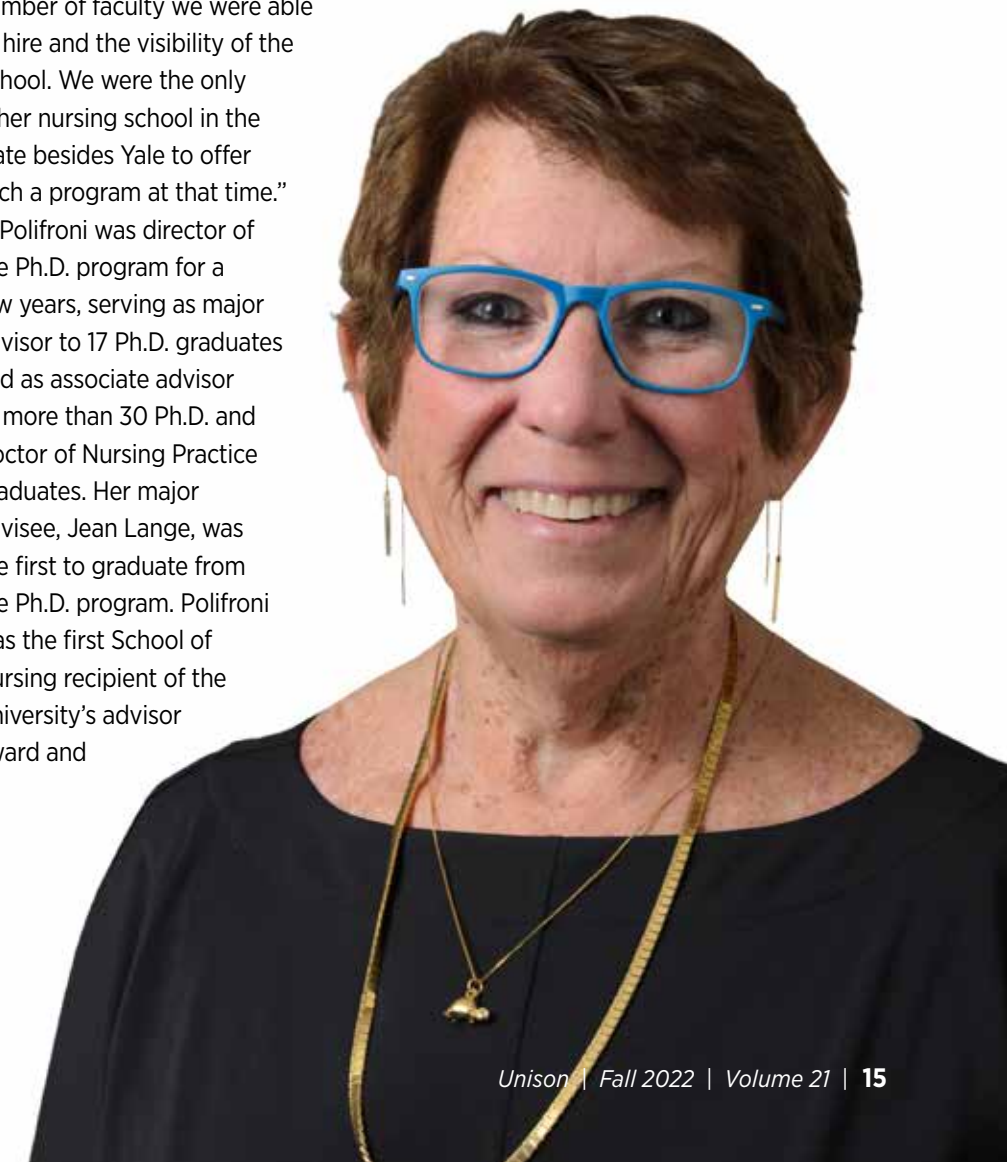
Polifroni was director of the Ph.D. program for a few years, serving as major advisor to 17 Ph.D. graduates and as associate advisor to more than 30 Ph.D. and Doctor of Nursing Practice graduates. Her major advisee, Jean Lange, was the first to graduate from the Ph.D. program. Polifroni was the first School of Nursing recipient of the University’s advisor award and

the second to receive the award across the entire University.

“Every Ph.D. student and many undergraduate and master’s students that I have advised, I know exactly where they are now,” she says. “I get emails and cards from students all the time. I will miss new students, but those relationships will be with me forever.”

Polifroni says that one of the reasons she stayed at UConn was the opportunities to fulfill different roles and to serve at the University level. Over the years, she has been a member and chair of many University Senate committees, chaired the Senate Executive Committee,

Faculty members E. Carol Polifroni, Ed.D., CNE, RN, NEA-BC, ANEF, far right, and Thomas Long, Ph.D., retired at the end of the spring 2022 semester.



and was also the president of the UConn chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

“The depth and breadth of Carol’s commitment to the School of Nursing, the University, and to the nursing profession in Connecticut is remarkable,” Long says of his colleague. “It is very unusual to find a faculty member of her enduring commitment to the same institution.”

A newer addition to the School’s faculty, but no less beloved, Long is a medical humanities scholar. He holds a Ph.D. in English and two master’s degrees—one in English and the other in theology. He was professor-in-residence at the School of Nursing and served on the affiliate faculty of UConn’s American Studies program.

Long made a lasting impression on students as director of the Nursing House Learning Community, a position he held since 2019. He also served the School as curator of the Josephine A. Dolan Nursing History Collection and served on the University Senate since 2019. In 2020, he received the Teaching Innovation Award from UConn’s First Year Experience program and the

Provost’s Outstanding Service Award.

“I would tell students that I am their ‘UConn uncle,’ and I would take that seriously,” Long says. “I was there when they were in trouble, and I would stop what I was doing to look after things with them. My principle is presence is more important than programming.”

Long joined the School of Nursing in 2008, along with several other non-nurse faculty members. His experience with technical and professional writing, along with his expertise in medical humanities and health studies, made him a good fit for the School. As the School and University emphasized research funding and publications, Long was the writing expert who helped faculty and students promote their work.

He became curator of the Dolan Collection at the request of then-Dean Regina Cusson. He also taught the course Nursing’s Past as Prologue, making history come to life for his students. Long often used artifacts and documents from the collection to drive his syllabus, asking students to identify objects and catalog the archives.

“I would bring in archival boxes and give each student an object,” he says.

“They would have to photograph it, describe it, and spend the rest of the semester researching it and writing up what they found.”

Long says he has several small projects he would like to tackle in retirement, including a digital humanities project based on 19th century verse manuscripts he has collected over the years. He may also spend time taking a few graduate-level English courses and volunteering.

“I would love to stay connected to the University, as long as I do not have to grade papers anymore,” he says.

Polifroni will be easing into her retirement, staying connected with the School by teaching master’s courses, before deciding what her next chapter holds.

“I am very grateful for all the opportunities I have received at the University and I think it has been mutually beneficial,” Polifroni says. “It is because I had service opportunities at the University level, as well as at the School level and state level, that I have stayed as long as I have. I feel I have done what I set out to do.” **U**

## PARTING WORDS OF WISDOM TO STUDENTS

**Several Honors students in the Introduction to the Discipline of Nursing course completed a project interviewing retiring faculty E. Carol Polifroni, Ed.D., CNE, RN, NEA-BC, ANEF, and Thomas Long, Ph.D. The course focuses on nursing history through seven trends: nursing image, nursing education, war, advances in practice, research, licensure and regulation, and workforce issues. Both professors’ contributions at UConn and to nursing paved historical and future work and the students requested to hear their perspectives on several topics:**

**Q: Dr. Long, have you witnessed a shift in the image of nursing during your career? If so, what did this shift look like?**

**A:** The complexities of nursing practice and the scope of practice have broadened. The authority of that practice has broadened. Nurses are considered to be, based on Gallup polling, the most ethical and trustworthy professionals and have been for about 20 years. What worries me is it is not just enough that you are the most trustworthy health professionals. I want you to also be the most authoritative health professionals.

**Q: Dr. Long, what changes have you seen in curriculum and how has that affected or will it affect the future of nursing education? How does nursing theory support nursing education?**

**A:** The various transformations of our curriculum are astonishing. I think the things that most strike me are an emphasis on leadership and on cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity in nursing, health care, and working toward that goal here in our School. Nursing has this tremendous treasury of theory—grand theory, mid-range theory, theory related to specific issues, theory related to the whole profession—and it seems to me that recognition of that great treasury

E. Carol Polifroni and Thomas Long have both generously supported School of Nursing students and faculty through funds at the UConn Foundation. The School welcomes gifts to their named funds in honor of their retirement:

### ELIZABETH OTTO POLIFRONI SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Visit [www.foundation.uconn.edu/fund/elizabeth-otto-scholarship-fund/](http://www.foundation.uconn.edu/fund/elizabeth-otto-scholarship-fund/) to give.

### DR. THOMAS L. LONG NURSING SCHOLARS FUND

Visit [www.foundation.uconn.edu/give-now/search/](http://www.foundation.uconn.edu/give-now/search/) and enter “Dr. Thomas L. Long Nursing Scholars Fund” to give.

will guide the curriculum and provide students with this sense of coherence about their four years at UConn but also beyond in their practice.

**Q: Dr. Polifroni, what do you think are the biggest challenges nurses face in the workforce and how can nursing education better prepare our future nurses?**

**A:** Nurses are challenged for a number of different reasons: there are too few of us, people even in 2022 do not know exactly what nurses do, and nurses are verbally abused on a daily basis whether from patients, families, or colleagues. All that makes the environment very challenging, but at the same time it gives us a huge opportunity. We need to be most articulate about who we are as nurses and what our role is to fulfill.

Nursing education’s job is to facilitate the nurse’s environment so that they ask the question ‘why,’ so the nurse is able to think outside that proverbial box, and they are able to critically analyze a situation. The workforce is complicated and complex. It is spinning faster than many of us can keep up with, but at the same time the role of the nurse is coming to the forefront.

**Q: Dr. Polifroni, why is research such an important factor in the nursing profession? How does nursing theory support research?**

**A:** Research is the backbone of our practice at this point. It provides us the

greater assurance, not a guarantee, but a greater assurance that we are going to achieve quality of care. The purpose of research is to refute theory because we want to grow, expand, and have the latest knowledge. Theory becomes the framework by which our work is done.

**Q: Dr. Polifroni, with changes in licensing and regulation over time and even with different models of NCLEX, were there any ways in which the UConn curriculum had to adjust without affecting the integrity of curriculum?**

**A:** The curriculum is constantly changing because the world of practice is constantly changing. It is not so much that the curriculum has changed, but our pedagogy, the way that we teach, has changed. What we teach has changed too, but the changes to how we teach make a difference in what a student ultimately takes with them when they graduate.

**Q: Dr. Long, what component of nursing history do you wish the School will continue to preserve?**

**A:** Nursing, historically, has been holistic and interdisciplinary. That foundational notion that a nurse is not a mechanic fixing a broken part, but is looking at a whole person, is absolutely critical.

## SCHOOL SAYS FAREWELL TO PEGGY STOLFI AND VAL BANFI

Two other pillars for the School of Nursing retired after the spring 2022 semester: Pellegrina Stolfi, MSN, APRN, MED, CS, and Valori Banfi.

Stolfi was a member of the School’s clinical faculty for 21 years. She embodied clinical teaching excellence in both the traditional undergraduate and Certificate Entry into Nursing programs. Not only did she love what she was doing every day, but she built strong relationships with clinical partners, most significantly Hartford Public Schools and Connecticut Children’s. Throughout her time at UConn, Stolfi went above and beyond to create meaningful, memorable, and quality clinical learning experiences for students. In her honor,

the School established a new annual award to be given at commencement: the Pellegrina (Peggy) Lacovella Stolfi Clinical Teaching Award. This year’s inaugural recipients were adjunct clinical faculty Monika Nelson, Ph.D., MBA, RN-BC, and Sophia Sopczneski, MSN, RN, as well as clinical instructor Hsinfen Tu, MSN, RN.

Banfi worked for the UConn Library as a reference and science librarian but acted as the subject specialist to the School of Nursing since 2007. She had an immeasurable impact on the School’s research and grant efforts, and faculty and staff are forever grateful for her guidance and expertise.

# Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Prompts Gradual Culture Shift at the School

Now in its second year, the School of Nursing's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) has further embedded diversity principles into the atmosphere of the School. Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion MaryAnn Perez-Brescia, Ph.D., RN, who is also an assistant clinical professor, has gone above and beyond the goals she set for the office for the 2021-2022 academic year. She says she is starting to see a shift in the atmosphere of the School that she hopes will continue.

"The awareness of and willingness to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion has increased greatly," she says. "I am hopeful that, over time, as we continue to have conversations about race in a safe, trusting environment, they will begin to feel like everyday conversations."

## Diversity Engagement Survey

Perez-Brescia began the 2021-2022 academic year by conducting a Diversity Engagement Survey, which contained 22 questions related to eight factors that connect engagement theory to inclusion and diversity constructs. All responses on the survey are scored on a five-point Likert scale, with five corresponding to strongly agree and one to strongly disagree.

Email invitations to participate in the survey were sent to 1,076 faculty, staff, and students. Around 572 responded and 511 completed the survey in its entirety.

The School received an overall score of four, indicating students, faculty, and staff feel engaged and included. This scoring pattern was similar across all races and ethnicities in students. A few respondents scored the School at a one or a two; open-ended questions at the end of the survey revealed that those participants chose those scores based on racial incidents on campus from a few years ago. Perez-Brescia says these are preliminary results and that she and her colleague Stephen Walsh, ScD, MTS, SCM, who also assisted with the initial analysis, need to go back and analyze further.

"As a result of the survey, we discussed the importance of addressing racial trauma as incidents occur to ensure a sense of safety in students," Perez-Brescia says. "We also knew from anecdotal data that some students did not participate in the survey and did not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts on the survey. Therefore, we hired an outside facilitator to administer a restorative healing workshop during the spring

of 2022. We will continue to listen to the needs of our students and respond accordingly. We will do better than we have in the past."

## Strategic Plan and Faculty Training

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are now also embedded into the School's Strategic Plan, as core values of the School and as focus areas with objectives and metrics. The faculty merit process also now evaluates professors' and instructors' DEI efforts in teaching, scholarship, and service. All faculty also attended microaggressions training, building on the implicit bias training from the previous academic year.

## DEI Webpage

The Office of DEI has a new webpage on the School of Nursing website, where all members of the School community can learn about DEI efforts, access resources across the University, and get involved with a new student group.

Prominently displayed on the webpage is the School's updated diversity statement: "UConn School of Nursing is committed to diversity and the excellence it facilitates. We embrace diversity of race/ethnicity,



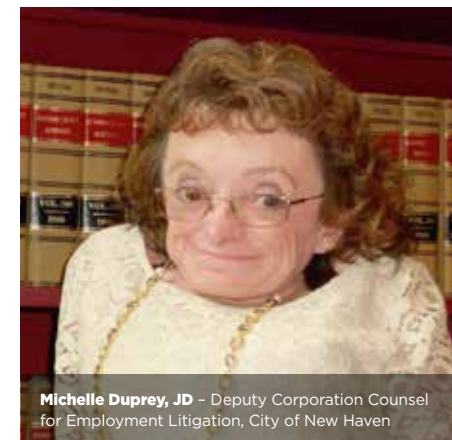
**Gayle Allen-Greene, MS, BS** - former principal at Hartford Board of Education, Bulkeley High School



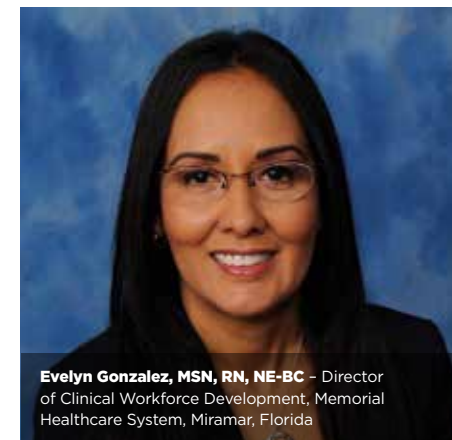
**Carlos Brown, MHA** - Regional Vice President of Integrity and Compliance, Trinity Health of New England



**Peggy Chinn, Ph.D., MS, RN** - Professor Emerita



**Michelle Duprey, JD** - Deputy Corporation Counsel for Employment Litigation, City of New Haven



**Evelyn Gonzalez, MSN, RN, NE-BC** - Director of Clinical Workforce Development, Memorial Healthcare System, Miramar, Florida



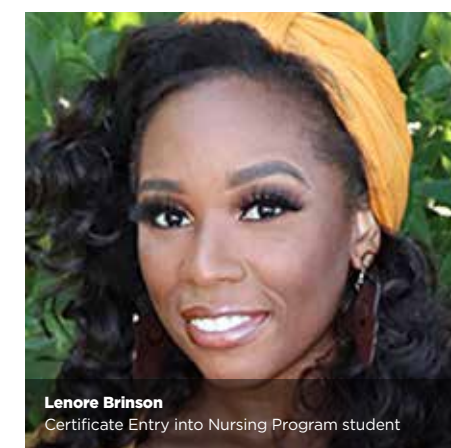
**Greg Jones, MPA, MBA** - Vice President for Community Health and Engagement, Hartford Hospital



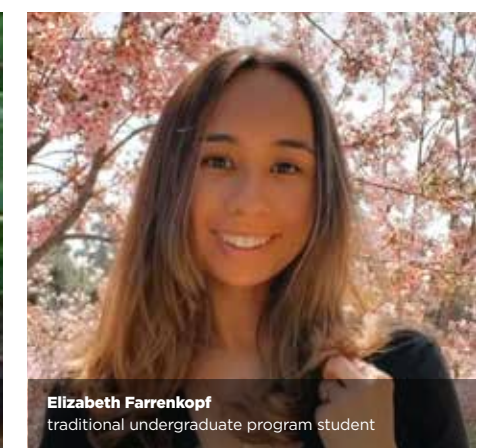
**Ena Williams, MBA, RN, CNEP** - Chief Nursing Officer, Yale New Haven Health



**Lucinda Canty '20 Ph.D., CNM** - certified nurse-midwife and assistant professor, University of St. Joseph



**Lenore Brinson** - Certificate Entry into Nursing Program student



**Elizabeth Farrenkopf** - traditional undergraduate program student

## Meet the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's External Advisory Committee

None of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's work would be possible without the ongoing input from its external advisory committee. Members of the committee include current students, alumni, and members of the public.



MaryAnn Perez-Brescia, Ph.D., RN,  
Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

gender, abilities, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic situation, background, experiences, and thought. This diversity culminates in strength that advances our learning, research and scholarship, practice, service, and innovation. Our faculty, staff, and students are required to cultivate equity and inclusion in all campus and clinical-based activities. A perception of belonging for all and the creation of equitable health care for our communities will be realized. We understand that first we must dismantle our social constructs founded on racism and are dedicated

to eliminating all acts of racism or bias at the School of Nursing. We will have zero tolerance for actions that breach our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Acts that defy these beliefs will be examined and adjudicated.”

**Admissions Requirements**

In October 2021, the School’s faculty approved removing physics as an admissions requirement for undergraduate nursing students. The change applied to students who were admitted in fall 2022 and allows more students to apply to the School,

even if their high school does not offer physics courses. Perhaps partly due to this change, the School had nearly 2,500 applicants to its Class of 2026—the largest first-year applicant pool ever.

**Black History Month**

In February, Perez-Brescia solicited nominations of current students and alumni to be recognized during Black History Month. Called “Making History During Black History Month,” the initiative honored members of the School of Nursing community who have advanced or impacted the education or health of Black Americans and African Americans. Each nominee who accepted the honor was featured on the School’s social media platforms and on digital signage in the Widmer Wing of Storrs Hall.

**New Student Organization**

Perez-Brescia worked with nursing students to create a new student organization on the Storrs campus: the Future Nurses for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The group is dedicated to the mission of creating diversity, equity, and inclusion within health care as a service and in the workplace. Group members intend to create a community of underrepresented students and allies varying between ethnicity, race, country of origin, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, cultural practices, and religious affiliations, so that they can acknowledge and appreciate individual experiences as they affect practices.

The students hope to influence the School’s social atmosphere and

**“The awareness of and willingness to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion has increased greatly. I am hopeful that, over time, as we continue to have conversations about race in a safe, trusting environment, they will begin to feel like everyday conversations.”**

— MaryAnn Perez-Brescia, Ph.D., RN, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

educate each other so that they may all respect varying experiences and views, making them better professionals in the future equipped with empathy, understanding, and knowledge for their interactions with patients and coworkers. The group’s activities so far have included social and educational events, like keynote speakers, and they hope to create volunteer opportunities for clinical work in communities that are affected by the systemic inequities they learn about. The organization is affiliated with the School of Nursing but is open to all health care majors.

The student group is currently planning an event for October in honor of the 50th anniversaries of UConn’s Women’s Center and Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center. The plan is to work with local artists and musicians to hold an art sale and fundraiser to support UConn initiatives dedicated to diversity and health care. Fall 2022 will be busy for Perez-Brescia, as she is also planning to host a virtual Fireside Chat event in honor of National Hispanic Heritage Month. The Fireside Chat event series has been hosted by the School of Nursing and its Alumni Board since January 2021. Each virtual event focuses on a different topic of interest to School of Nursing alumni. The Hispanic Heritage Month event will feature panelists who work to improve health care and equity for Hispanic populations.

**Goals for 2022-2023**

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion’s goals for its third year feature both large and small initiatives: bringing back the faculty and staff book club and discussion, which was popular its inaugural year in 2020; continuing to facilitate professional development for faculty; conducting ongoing climate assessments of the School; and evaluating the School’s policies and practices to ensure they are up-to-date and effective in terms of diversity values. But two planned initiatives with the most potential impact are the holistic admissions pilot program and a new community outreach program mentoring high school students.

Faculty in the School’s Certificate Entry into Nursing (CEIN) Program have been trained in holistic admissions and are now in the process of building a new admissions decisions framework. The hope is to create an admissions process that “assesses an applicant’s unique experiences alongside traditional measures of academic achievement,” according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. The School of Nursing’s CEIN Program plans to pilot the framework they develop before seeing if it can be adopted by the School’s other programs.

The new community outreach program is being developed in partnership with the Capitol Region

Education Council. Perez-Brescia and her team are currently seeking grant funding to support mentorship activities for students in grades eight through 10 throughout the academic year, as well as a weeklong summer day camp at the School of Nursing. The goal is to expose students to the nursing profession, through simulation activities and basic health training at the summer camp, and help them navigate the college application process and the prerequisites they would need to apply to a nursing program.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has accomplished a lot in just two years, but Perez-Brescia, as evidenced by her goals for the next year, knows there is always more that can be done.

“I want the School to have the natural mindset that diversity brings excellence, that it is not a task that we must complete, but something we embrace to make ourselves better,” she says. “There are so many assets to diversity that enhance our profession, our scholarship, and our service.”

*To learn more about the School of Nursing’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, visit [nursing.uconn.edu/about/dei](https://nursing.uconn.edu/about/dei).* **U**

# Neonatal Nurse Practitioner Program Celebrates 10 Years of Online Learning and a Top 10 National Ranking

Ten years ago, Sandra Bellini, DNP, APRN, NNP-BC, CNE, and the other faculty members who lead UConn School of Nursing’s neonatal nurse practitioner program took a leap of faith.

They explored other neonatal programs across the country and realized they were losing students to online programs, which were easier for working nurses to fit into their busy schedules and complete from home. Therefore, Bellini and her team, with full support from the School of Nursing and UConn’s Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, moved the School’s neonatal master’s concentration fully online.

**“The reputation of the program among prospective students is that you are going to work really hard, but you will never feel like you are doing it alone and you will never feel unsupported by the faculty.”**

— Sandra Bellini, DNP, APRN, NNP-BC, CNE

“We went online in 2013 completely intertwined with the eCampus team at CETL,” says Bellini, who directed the program up until August. “We could not have done any of this without them. Every course in the program was designed by a neonatal faculty member and someone from eCampus. It definitely was a leap of faith for both sides.”

Now, 10 years later, the program is ranked as the No. 8 online nursing master’s program in the country, according to *U.S. News & World Report*, and is one of the five largest neonatal programs in the U.S., with approximately 92 students currently enrolled.

“I commend Dr. Bellini and the other neonatal faculty for their program’s incredible success,” says School of Nursing Dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN. “Their dedication and their students’ hard work made this well-deserved recognition possible. All of us at the School are proud of their accomplishments and offer our heartfelt congratulations.”

It was not an easy road to success, however. Bellini recalls that the program was on the brink of extinction when her team began planning the switch to online.

“We knew that neonatal nurse practitioner education elsewhere had gone online in the mid- to- late 1990s,” she says. “We were very aware that we were coming into something really late in the game and that, if we wanted to be successful, we were going to have to go well above and beyond what our academic competitors were doing. And that was just in order to exist and keep our heads above water.”

Bellini, along with fellow faculty members Mary Whalen, DNP, NNP-BC, APRN, and Michele Beaulieu, DNP, APRN, NNP-BC, admitted eight students in that first online cohort in August 2013. The three educators had met while studying in the same Doctor of Nursing Practice program years before and knew the fate of UConn’s neonatal program was in their hands.

“I said to my teammates, ‘This is go big or go home because we are going to lose the program if we cannot make it successful,’” Bellini says.

So, they went big. Their original goal was to admit eight students every other year. But after that pilot cohort finished the program in 2015-2016, the number of applicants they received continued to climb. Between 2016 and 2020, the cohort sizes went from eight every other year, to 16 every year, then stayed at 24 annually for a





Neonatal nurse practitioner Class of 2022 graduates pose for a photo with faculty members at commencement on May 7.

couple of years, and finally capped at 32 annually, which is where Bellini says it will remain.

“I believe prospective students come to UConn because they have heard students and graduates say that the program is big enough to have a serious, respected national reputation, but at the same time it is small enough that they know the faculty and other students, the faculty know them, and they do not lose that concierge kind of service,” she says.

The program’s growth and quality engagement with students is reflected in its robust national reputation. In the past three years alone, the program’s *U.S. News & World Report* ranking has climbed from No. 82 to No. 14 and now stands at No. 8. It is an honor that Bellini says would not have

been possible without support from CETL and the School of Nursing.

In creating its rankings, *U.S. News* focuses on five categories: student engagement with classmates and instructors; faculty credentials and training; opinions from academic officials in nursing; services and technologies offered; and student excellence.

“We love our students,” Bellini says. “The reputation of the program among prospective students is that you are going to work really hard in this program, but you will never feel like you are doing it alone and you will never feel unsupported by the faculty.”

Because of that faculty support and the quality of the program, students who graduate do exceptionally well on

their National Certification Corporation exams. In 2021, 100% of program graduates who completed the exam passed.

“I do not believe any of us predicted just how successful the online neonatal program would be,” Chyun says. “Its impact goes beyond its national acclaim and students’ success. It has also led the way for our other master’s program concentrations to move online and reach many more students.”

In the fall of 2021, the five other master’s concentrations offered by the School of Nursing—adult gerontology acute care nurse practitioner, adult gerontology primary care nurse practitioner, family nurse practitioner, nurse educator, and nurse leader—completed the transition to fully online learning.

“The other master’s program tracks are going to do well,” Bellini says. “The University and School are there to support them, we have phenomenal subject matter experts teaching the other tracks, and their partnership with CETL and eCampus, just like ours, will make all the difference.”

At the end of the 2021-2022 academic year, Bellini stepped down as director of the neonatal program and both she and Whalen changed to a part-time teaching schedule. Faculty member Valarie Artigas ’17 DNP, APRN, NNP-BC, who joined the program in 2020, has taken over as director and has hired full-time educator Tiffany Gwartney, DNP, APRN, NNP-BC.

“Directing this program has been one of the most challenging, yet fun, things I have ever done professionally,” Bellini says. “If you have the right people with you, you can make it happen. Now it is a mature, well-established program and it goes to Dr. Artigas for its next chapter.”

Regardless of how the program’s future unfolds, the past 10 years have led its faculty to discover an equation for success: collective vision, teamwork, attention to students, and the courage to take a leap of faith.

To learn more about UConn School of Nursing’s Neonatal Nursing Online Program, visit [neonatal-nursing.online.uconn.edu](https://neonatal-nursing.online.uconn.edu). **U**

## MASTER’S AND DNP PROGRAMS AMONG THE TOP 5 IN NEW ENGLAND

*U.S. News & World Report* released its 2023 rankings for the best graduate schools in the country, and UConn School of Nursing placed in the top five for both master’s and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs in New England.

The School is ranked No. 34 among nursing master’s programs in the U.S. and No. 40 among the country’s DNP programs. Among higher education institutions in New England, UConn’s nursing master’s program is No. 3, behind only Yale University and Boston College, and its DNP program is No. 2 after Yale.

The UConn School of Nursing master’s program has had a steady presence on the best graduate programs list the past few years, and it has risen dramatically in *U.S. News*’ best online programs rankings. The master’s program has six concentrations—adult gerontology acute care nurse practitioner, adult gerontology primary care nurse practitioner, family nurse practitioner, neonatal nurse practitioner, nurse educator, and nurse leader—offering students a variety of specialties to choose from.

The DNP program has continued to climb in the best graduate schools rankings in recent years. Last year, it was ranked No. 44 and, two years ago, was No. 59. UConn’s DNP program was the first ever in Connecticut and is offered primarily online, with intensive format courses required on campus only once or twice a year. Students have the opportunity to specialize in their area of interest, while earning a doctorate focused on practice and leadership.

For the 2023 rankings, 199 master’s programs and 158 DNP programs across the country were evaluated.

Find the complete lists of the 2023 *U.S. News & World Report Best Nursing Schools rankings* online at [usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-nursing-schools](https://usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-nursing-schools).



Carole and Ray Neag  
Comprehensive Cancer  
Center at UConn Health  
in Farmington

## Flynn Fellowships Provide Unique Learning Opportunities for Students Interested in Oncology Nursing

Concern about the shortage of nurses in the U.S. was high even before the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the issue, causing many nurses to suffer burnout or retire early. Nine years ago, UConn alumnus Fred Flynn '75 MBA was ahead of the times and saw a way to help fill the demand.

When Flynn's wife Susan valiantly battled ovarian cancer and eventually succumbed to the disease in 2013, it was the oncology and palliative care nurses, he says, who showed his family the most compassion. One year later, Flynn created the Susan D. Flynn Oncology Nursing Development Program in memory of his late wife and as an ongoing tribute to her caregivers.

"Nurses make all the difference in the world," Flynn says. "You spend 12 minutes every three months with your doctor, and you spend 24/7 with your nurses."

The program's main initiative is creating paid oncology fellowship opportunities for rising senior nursing students at leading hospitals on the East Coast. Since 2014, the Flynn

Fellowship Program has partnered with several Connecticut hospitals and cancer centers, including UConn Health. This past May, Flynn announced that the program will expand from 32 fellowships a year to 54 by 2026, in response to the market demand for this unique program.

"Students get very little academic or clinical exposure to oncology because it is perceived as a specialty," he says. "Unlike the corporate world or specialty areas like law and accounting, there are very few meaningful, paid, specialty internships that pave the way to job opportunities right after graduation for nurses."

Since 2016, 27 UConn School of Nursing students have been selected as Flynn Fellows, including six members of the Class of 2023 who completed their fellowships this past summer. Flynn says that is the highest number of students selected from one school in one summer since the start of the program and reflects the high quality of nursing students UConn is producing. Catherine Cantelmo and Tarrèse Folk were Flynn

Fellows at UConn Health, Charlotte Hamilton at Greenwich Hospital, Quyen Le at Connecticut Children's, Shika Reji at Hartford Hospital, and Alison Lopez Valdivia at Stamford Hospital.

Of the 21 UConn School of Nursing graduates who have also completed the Flynn Fellowship Program, 14 are currently working in Connecticut hospitals and 12 are oncology nurses.

"We are grateful our students have access to this opportunity through the Susan D. Flynn Oncology Nursing Development Program," says Dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN. "They learn invaluable skills and enter the workforce better prepared to help patients, whether in oncology units or elsewhere."

The application process for the program is rigorous. Host hospitals competitively select rising college seniors to intern at their respective locations, where they spend eight to 10 weeks in the summer. Acceptance to the program is based on meticulous evaluations of an applicant's academic credentials, personal experience, and interest in oncology. In the past nine years nearly 3,000 aspiring nurses have applied for the 262 available fellowship positions.

During the fellowship, students are exposed to a variety of hands-on and observational learning experiences, covering topics such as oncology nursing, medical-surgical oncology, oncology clinic processes and routines, palliative/supportive care services, infusion services including chemotherapy and immunotherapy administration, radiation therapy, patient support programs, oncology nurse navigation, and cancer genetics counseling services.

Every Flynn Fellow is also required to complete an evidence-based research project on some aspect of oncology nursing during the program. Each student presents their project at the program graduation ceremony to their hospital's nursing administration and others, including Flynn.

"The quality of the work is amazing," he says. "The students get up in front of the chief nursing officer, staff, preceptors, their parents, and me, and they dazzle us."

The six UConn School of Nursing students who participated in the program this past summer all had similar reasons for applying for the fellowship: They experienced the health care system as a result of familial connections or clinical rotations on oncology floors, inspiring them to help others as a result.

"My dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2017 and was initially treated at Greenwich Hospital," says Hamilton, who had a full-circle moment when she was selected as a Flynn Fellow at Greenwich Hospital. "As a junior in high school who was already interested in a career in health care, witnessing the phenomenal care his nurses provided to both him and my family was truly inspiring. I am so grateful to them and that my dad remains in remission and healthy to this day."

"I have a family member who is a survivor of cancer, which originally piqued my interest in the subject," says Cantelmo, who was one of the two UConn students at UConn Health this summer. "I was also inspired by the nurses that I saw during my junior year clinical experiences and their amazing capacity to care for oncology patients in such critical conditions."

The origin story of the Flynn Fellowships offered through UConn Health actually has ties to the UConn basketball program, of which Flynn is a fan. He crossed paths with former men's head coach Jim Calhoun in 2015 in Indianapolis during the Final Four. Knowing Calhoun's own experience with cancer, Flynn says he gave Calhoun his elevator pitch about the Flynn Fellowship Program and his card. The two met up a few weeks later and Calhoun graciously connected Flynn with the administration at UConn Health.

"We are thrilled to be completing our seventh year as a host hospital for the Susan D. Flynn Oncology Nursing Fellowship here at UConn Health," says clinical nurse specialist Devon Bandouveres, MSN, RN, OCN. "Our fellows get to spend time on our inpatient oncology unit and in the Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center. The inspiring nature of this fellowship has launched many new oncology nurses into the workforce which is incredibly valuable to host organizations, especially during these unprecedented times in health care."



Fred Flynn '75 MBA, created the Susan D. Flynn Oncology Nursing Development Program in memory of his late wife and as an ongoing tribute to her caregivers. Flynn's wife Susan valiantly battled ovarian cancer and eventually succumbed to the disease in 2013.



As part of the expansion Flynn announced in May, his program will soon begin offering new fellowships for students who are interested in specializing in palliative care. These new fellowships are currently being piloted at HopeHealth in Rhode Island and Flynn says they will also be available at Calvary Hospital in New York next summer.


“Students in the oncology fellowship program read the leading books on palliative care, complete a six-hour end-of-life communications course, and spend at least a week in palliative care during their fellowship,” he says. “Now I am going to be able to offer aspiring nurses who want to go right into palliative care a streamlined career pathway to do so.”

By the time they complete their Flynn Fellowship, students have joined a network of nurses who they can turn to for the rest of their careers. Not only are fellows mentored by hospital staff and previous Flynn Fellows during the summer, but Flynn himself serves as their career advocate long beyond the internship. He actively writes references for his former fellows and helps connect them with oncology nursing positions across the country.

“They are not only good students, they are also very caring and compassionate,” Flynn says. “It is satisfying to work with aspiring nurses who are passionate about something so purposeful, and they are so grateful to have someone help them pursue their dream jobs. They are like my extended family, and we stay in touch.”

Flynn started his program to give back to those who helped his wife and family during the end of her life. His Flynn Fellows, in turn, give back to communities all over the country when they begin their careers, whether in oncology nursing or another specialty. Folk has one year left of her undergraduate nursing program and already has big plans for her future, thanks to the skills she has learned at UConn and through her Flynn Fellowship.

“I hope to educate communities who lack cancer knowledge and measures that can potentially decrease the chance of being diagnosed with the disease,” Folk says. “Statistically, African Americans have the highest percentage of being diagnosed with and dying of cancer, so as an African American female it has become my mission to provide care to minorities.”

To learn more about the Susan D. Flynn Oncology Nursing Development Program, visit [SDFOND.com](http://SDFOND.com). 

Since 2016, 27 UConn School of Nursing students have been selected as Flynn Fellows, including six members of the Class of 2023 who completed their fellowships this past summer. They are:



Charlotte Hamilton



Catherine Cantelmo



Quyen Le



Alison Lopez Valdivia



Shika Reji



Tarrese Folk

## FEATURE STORY

# World-Renowned Nurse Scientist Nancy Redeker Joins the School of Nursing

The School of Nursing welcomed acclaimed researcher and educator Nancy Redeker, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN, to its faculty in March. The UConn Board of Trustees approved Redeker’s appointment as professor with tenure at its Sept. 29, 2021, meeting.

Redeker, who is a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing and the American Heart Association, has an international reputation in biobehavioral nursing science. Previously, she was the Beatrice Renfield Professor of Nursing at Yale University and director of the Yale School of Nursing Center for Biobehavioral Health Research. Her sustained program of research addresses the role of sleep and sleep disorders, and the effects of behavioral sleep promotion interventions, in people who have acute and chronic conditions.

A few months after joining the School, Redeker also stepped into the role of interim associate dean for research and scholarship.

“We are thrilled to have Dr. Redeker join our esteemed faculty,” says Dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN. “Her knowledge and experience are incredible assets for our students and our transformative research and learning programs. Her research focus pairs well with our faculty members’ areas of expertise, and I look forward to seeing how future collaborations will help us all grow.”

Before her time at Yale, Redeker spent 15 years at Rutgers University in New Jersey and the University of

Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (now part of Rutgers), where she held various positions within the College of Nursing, including director of graduate programs in nursing, interim dean, and associate dean for research.

“Public universities like UConn have a mission to the state,” she says. “It is a mission to the local public as well as the national public and that is really important to me. The UConn School of Nursing also has a large undergraduate program and I think it is important for research education, which I specialize in, to span all levels of higher education. I am really excited to be here at UConn and share my experience to support that.”

She says she is also looking forward to expanding her research through new collaborations at UConn.

“Sleep research is an inherently interdisciplinary field,” Redeker says. “It has been an important experience for me to partner with researchers in different fields, not only because it has helped my research, but because I have been able to bring my nursing perspective to others. I hope to continue that at UConn.”

In 2017, Redeker was inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Nurse Researchers Hall of Fame, the world’s leading nursing research-oriented

award, and in 2016, she received the Distinguished Contribution to Nursing Research Award from the Eastern Nursing Research Society, the nation’s leading nursing research-oriented professional society.

She says that, despite her accolades in research, what first inspired her to begin a career in academia was the desire to educate future nurses and nurse scientists.

*Continued on page 44*





# Welcoming New Faculty

We were thrilled to welcome several 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.



**Maurade Gormley, Ph.D., C-PNP**

One of the School of Nursing's new assistant professors, Maurade Gormley, Ph.D., C-PNP, has spent most of her academic career at New York University. In August, she traveled to Storrs to join the UConn faculty.

Building upon her experience as an oncology nurse, Gormley's research aims to optimize the psychosocial health and well-being of cancer survivors as they face the unique challenges of a cancer diagnosis. Her doctoral work, funded by an F31 National Research Service Award, examined the psychosocial response to genomic testing used to predict the risk of recurrence and benefit of adjuvant chemotherapy among breast cancer survivors.

Her current research aims to better understand the mechanisms and pathways that may contribute to racial disparities in breast cancer mortality, such as the physiologic response (cortisol, relative

telomere length, epigenetics) to stress in the survivorship period and over the life course. This research will lay the groundwork to develop targeted interventions to promote adaptive coping behaviors aimed to moderate the physiologic response to stress.

Gormley completed the Provost Postdoctoral Fellowship Program at New York University with additional training at the National Institute of Nursing Research's Summer Genetics Institute and National Cancer Institute's Research Methods in Supportive Oncology at Harvard Medical School's Center for Palliative Care.



**Mallory A. Perry-Eaddy, Ph.D., RN, CCRN**

Triple Husky Mallory A. Perry-Eaddy '14 (NUR), '17 MS, '19 Ph.D. is returning to Connecticut after a few years in Philadelphia, joining the School of Nursing as an assistant professor.

Perry-Eaddy is a pediatric critical care nurse and National Institutes of Health-funded nurse scientist. Her interest in pediatric critical care outcomes originates from her experiences caring for critically ill children in the pediatric intensive care unit. Although significant progress has been made in improving survival rates in critically ill children, many undergo lifesaving intensive therapies that increase their risk of dysfunction after discharge. This is particularly true in children suffering from life-threatening conditions, especially those marked by inflammation, such as sepsis.

Overall, Perry-Eaddy's program of research aims to explore and characterize outcomes of critically ill children, including their response to treatments, biological response, and overall function as they recover with hopes to optimize recovery. She is currently funded by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences as a MOSAIC K99/R00 Scholar. Her K99/R00 is entitled, PEdiatric Recovery after sepSIS Treatment in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PERSIST-PICU).

Regarding teaching, Perry-Eaddy assures students that no question is "dumb." Conveying the idea of a questioning attitude is at the forefront of her philosophy. Through reiteration, self-guided research, as well as hands-on experience, she allows room for the novice to critically think through clinical scenarios. Skill acquisition is just one piece of nursing; being able to anticipate necessary interventions as well as implement them is what she strives for her students to know.

Committed to service, she is currently an active member of the International Society of Nurses in Genetics, Pediatric Acute Lung Injury and Sepsis Investigators, American Thoracic Society, and the Society of Critical Care Medicine.



**Ruth Lucas, Ph.D., RNC, CLS**



**Annette Jakubisin-Konicki, Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC, FNP-BC, FAANP, FAAN**



**Annette T. Maruca, Ph.D., RN-BC, CNE, CCHP**

**NEW CLINICAL FACULTY WHO HAVE JOINED US**

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

- **Angela Carrano, DNP, MSN, RN**
- **Tiffany Gwartney, DNP, APRN, NNP-BC**
- **Kimberly Kobelski, MSN, RN**
- **Cathi Lippman, MSN, RN**
- **Christina McElroy, MSN, RN**
- **Beth Weldon, MSN, RN**

**FACULTY PROMOTIONS**

We would like to congratulate a faculty member whose promotion was approved by the University's Board of Trustees in April:

**Promotion to Associate Professor and Tenure:**

- **Ruth Lucas, Ph.D., RNC, CLS**

**INTERIM ASSOCIATE DEANS**

The School would also like to introduce three new interim associate deans:

- **Annette Jakubisin-Konicki, Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC, FNP-BC, FAANP, FAAN**  
*Interim Associate Dean for Graduate Studies, effective Jan. 1*
- **Annette T. Maruca, Ph.D., RN-BC, CNE, CCHP**  
*Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, effective Jan. 1*
- **Nancy Redeker, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN**  
*Interim Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship, effective June 1*



## ‘We Need Nurses in Public Policy’: Recent Graduate Reflects on Internship in D.C.

**K**elsey MarcAurele '22 (NUR) spent the summer before her senior year in Washington, D.C., working in U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney's office and focusing on health policy legislation. The experience, she says, is one that she will never forget and will carry with her into her future career.

“A lot of people I spoke to did not understand why I was pursuing this internship,” MarcAurele says. “However, I believe we need nurses in public policy and I wanted to step into that work.”

A member of the UConn Honors Program and the cheerleading team, MarcAurele's varied interests also include nursing innovation. She transferred to UConn her sophomore year, drawn to its rich research and innovation environment.

In her first year at Storrs, Kelsey partnered with Ellen Quintana '21 (NUR) on ReduSeal, a patented glove waste reduction technology.

MarcAurele says her interest in health and public policy stems from her childhood, as her mother studied public policy in college. Politics and current events were always topics of discussion in her household, which taught MarcAurele to be open and thoughtful about policy.

“My mom taught me that you have to find the policy you are interested in yourself and read it directly from the text rather than hearing about it on the news,” she says. “You have to create your own ideas.”

MarcAurele says policy occasionally came up in her nursing

classes, but she noticed that the Covid-19 pandemic shifted the public's attention toward the politics of health care.

“The pandemic showed me how much we need nurses in policy, because our lawmakers are not directly involved in the delivery of health care,” MarcAurele says. “I happened to see Congressman Courtney's internship opportunity and I decided to go for it because we need health care workers in policy. It was really Covid-inspired.”

After being offered the congressional internship, MarcAurele moved to Washington, D.C., for six weeks. Within the congressman's office, her day-to-day tasks involved supporting Courtney by speaking with constituents, writing memos for legislation, and fulfilling other needs of the office.

A policy memo is a document written by a representative's staff explaining any new and pertinent information regarding legislation, issues that impact the district, or recommending a co-sponsorship. When a representative co-sponsors a bill, it means they agree with the contents of that bill. During MarcAurele's internship, she had the opportunity to work on a project related to the Stafford Act.

“The Stafford Act defines how the federal government responds to emergencies,” she says. “When a president declares an emergency or major disaster, that is referencing the Stafford Act.”

Emergency declarations and major disaster declarations are two separate events under the Stafford Act. Major

disasters allow the government to provide more federal aid and resources than emergency declarations.

“The current problem is that the definition of a major disaster does not include any public health outbreaks, such as the Covid-19 pandemic,” MarcAurele says.

At the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, former President Donald Trump announced a major disaster declaration. However, the Stafford Act clearly states which situations, such as a hurricane or terrorist attack, can be declared a major disaster. A public health emergency is not on this list of possible situations, and it could be argued that a pandemic does not meet the standards for a major disaster.

MarcAurele's proposal, therefore, focused on expanding the criteria for major disaster declarations.

“My proposal was that we add public health emergencies into the law, so it is an option for the future,” MarcAurele says. “Should this happen again, we can respond quicker, and situations may be easier to control.”

She says Courtney's office was very understanding and supportive of her work, and that her experience that summer permanently shaped her. She also had the opportunity to meet U.S. Rep. Cori Bush, who is also a registered nurse.

“I appreciated seeing a nurse in government,” MarcAurele says. “We talked about being a voice for other nurses. It was a moment I will always remember.”

While she says she enjoyed her time interning with Courtney, MarcAurele pursued pediatric nursing after graduating in May and now works at Connecticut Children's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at UConn Health. Once a Connecticut Children's patient herself, pediatrics has always been a passion for MarcAurele; her Honors research project studied the impact of pain on neurobehavioral outcomes in preterm infants.

“This project gave Kelsey the ability to work with a multidisciplinary research team and see how research is conducted,” says former School of Nursing faculty member Xiaomei Cong, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, who was also MarcAurele's Honors advisor. “Kelsey is a hard worker and enjoys immersing herself in her work.”

“Health policy is going to be a part of me wherever I go, even if it is nursing policy or hospital policy,” MarcAurele says. “Now that I have been around policy development, I do not foresee that it will ever leave my mindset. I am always going to be involved with health policy, even if it is not on a federal level.”



Kelsey MarcAurele '22 (NUR) spent the summer before her senior year in Washington, D.C., working in U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney's office and focusing on health policy legislation.

## Husband and Wife Nurses Walk the Commencement Stage Together

Jill Alsgaard '20 MS vividly remembers being 6 years old and watching her mother graduate with her master's degree in nursing. On May 7, Alsgaard's 6-year-old son watched both of his parents walk across the commencement stage together at the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts as they graduated from the School of Nursing's master's program.

Alsgaard and her husband, Trung Le '13 (NUR), '22 MS, met while working in the Intensive Care Unit at UConn Health's John Dempsey Hospital and were married in 2016. The couple bleeds blue not only as UConn Health employees, but as UConn alumni as well, as both previously earned other degrees through the School of Nursing.

"We were very good friends for some time, then it evolved," Alsgaard says.

They received special permission from the School of Nursing to walk across the stage together, rather than individually, at commencement. Alsgaard graduated from the Post-Graduate Acute Care Nurse Practitioner certificate program, while Le received his degree from the Master of Science Adult Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner program.

Previously, Alsgaard attended Capital Community College for her associate degree in nursing, and then Central Connecticut State University for her Bachelor of Science in nursing. As a new graduate, she began working at UConn Health in the ICU. Alsgaard then continued to UConn School of Nursing to pursue her Master of Science Family Nurse Practitioner degree.

"I graduated from that program in the height of the pandemic, May 2020," Alsgaard says. "I had formulated a plan early on in those studies to continue with the Post-Graduate Acute Care Nurse Practitioner certificate program."

Alsgaard took some time off following commencement, giving her time to take her board examinations over the summer and resume working at a local hospital. This fall, she plans to continue working toward her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree, which she began taking courses for during



Jill Alsgaard '20 MS and her husband Trung Le '13 (NUR), '22 MS hold their UConn diplomas after walking the commencement stage together on May 7, 2022.

her last semester of the master's program in 2020.

Le attended Muhlenberg College for his Bachelor of Science in biology. After working at a handful of laboratories, Le began working at UConn Health in the 1990s. He then went on to receive his Bachelor of Science in nursing through the accelerated Certificate Entry into Nursing program. Le is now also enrolled in the UConn Doctor of Nursing Practice program but has taken some time off following his graduation from the master's program.

"We have been through some incredible things over the past few years," Alsgaard says. "Lots of effort, courage, and tears have gone into this process. Our priority right now is our family, growing and enjoying life, as we all have given up just a bit to make this happen."

Alsgaard and Le have six children, some from previous marriages. Their youngest son is 6 years old, and their oldest, Le's daughter, will be graduating from UConn's School of Engineering in May 2023. The couple says it was exciting for their whole family to watch them graduate together on May 7.

"I think it is a pretty awesome feat that we accomplished," Le says. "We think it is even cooler that our children got to see us graduate, together."

## PH.D. STUDENTS AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS F31 GRANTS FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

UConn School of Nursing Ph.D. students Tingting Zhao, RN, and Bright Eze '19 (NUR), MS were recently awarded F31 grants from the National Institutes of Health. This prestigious award is granted to predoctoral students to facilitate their research as they navigate their dissertation work.

"We are incredibly proud of Bright and Tingting," says Dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN. "Not only is an F31 grant amazing in its own right, but it can also help ease the way for researchers to receive other NIH funding in the future. It is a foot in the door."

Zhao's research studies the impact of pain and stress experienced during a preterm infant's early life on their neurobehavioral outcomes later in life. She is focusing specifically on how this impacts the mitochondria, which is the part of the cell responsible for converting food and oxygen into energy necessary for bodily functions.

"I want to identify the noninvasive novel biomarkers related to mitochondrial function and pain and stress in preterm infants," she says. "I want to involve new technology and knowledge in genomics, and I would like to look at a longitudinal association between mitochondrial function or dysfunction and neurodevelopmental outcomes in preterm infants who experienced pain and stress in early life."

Eze is researching the disproportionate burdens of chronic pain for Black individuals compared to non-Hispanic whites. Eze says that Black Americans are more likely to report greater pain severity, have higher prevalence of common musculoskeletal conditions, and have a higher sensitivity to pain. Some health scientists argue that long-term exposure to adverse environmental conditions can result in a physiologic pain response called Conserved Transcriptional Response to Adversity (CTRA).

"My aim is to identify differences in psychosocial and neurobiological factors between Black and non-Hispanic white participants with low back pain at acute onset and at six months follow-up," he says.

Eze also hopes to study participants' mRNA expression and DNA profiles, as differences in these could indicate a link between an individual's genetic makeup and low back pain in Black and non-Hispanic whites.

"I am so proud of Tingting and Bright and their mentor teams for receiving the most prestigious predoctoral training award from the NIH's National Institute of Nursing Research," says former faculty member Xiaomei Cong, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, who advises both students. "Both of them are rising stars among future nursing researchers. Their research will explore



Tingting Zhao, RN, and Bright Eze '19 (NUR), MS, below.

the most complex mechanisms of pain and stress markers associated with health outcomes across the lifespan. The impact of their research is far-reaching in biobehavioral science and clinical practice of pain and stress management in vulnerable populations."

The application process for the F31 grant is demanding and rigorous. Both Zhao and Eze had to resubmit their applications twice before receiving their grants.

"I learned quickly that it is important to know how to face failure during the research grant process and to be patient," Zhao says. "The application itself is a learning process."

"Despite being rigorous, the grant process created a unique opportunity for me to collaborate with other researchers in other academic institutions and laboratories," Eze says. "I have learned a lot within and outside of academia."

Both students lost little time getting to work on their studies and say they are grateful for this opportunity.

"I am thankful, but this opportunity comes with a great deal of responsibility," Zhao says. "I have to make sure that everything goes to plan and that I accomplish all my goals."

"This grant means everything to me," Eze says. "I have been waiting for a moment like this since the day I submitted the grant. I cannot wait for the next step in my career as a research scholar."

To learn more about the School of Nursing's Ph.D. program, visit [phd.nursing.uconn.edu](http://phd.nursing.uconn.edu).

## 2022 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. This past May, we introduced two new faculty awards: the E. Carol Polifroni Scholarship of Praxis Award and the Pellegrina (Peggy) Lacovella Stolfi Clinical Teaching Award.

### *Carolyn Ladd Widmer Ph.D. Award*

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

**Adwoa Gyamfi**, 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.

**Lisa Garvey Harrison**, Ph.D. graduate

**Andrea Moran**, DNP graduate

**Erick Mercado**, MS graduate

**Peyton Cortese**, BS graduate

### *Josephine Dolan Award for the Scholarship of Application*

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

**Sarah Loschiavo**, 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.

**Samantha Gagliardi**, MS graduate

**Nicole Larson**, 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.

**Donice Brooks**, BS graduate

### *Clara Williams Holistic Nurse Award*

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

**Rylee Parent**, 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.

**Kelsey MarcAurele**, BS graduate

**Tiffany Kelley**, Ph.D., MBA, RN-BC,  
Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation Visiting Professor  
for Innovations and New Knowledge in Nursing

### *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.

**Dawn Sarage**, MSN, RN, CNL, CMSRN, CHSE,  
clinical instructor

### *E. Carol Polifroni Scholarship of Praxis Award*

The E. Carol Polifroni Scholarship of Praxis Award is given annually at graduation to a School of Nursing faculty member who has shown exemplary integration of theory, philosophy, research, and practice. UConn School of Nursing would not be the renowned institution it is today without the efforts and influence of E. Carol Polifroni.

**Louise Reagan**, Ph.D., ANP-BC, APRN,  
assistant professor

### *Pellegrina (Peggy) Lacovella Stolfi Clinical Teaching Award*

Peggy Stolfi has embodied clinical teaching excellence in both our traditional undergraduate and Certificate Entry into Nursing programs for the past 21 years. Not only did she love what she was doing every day, but she built strong relationships with clinical partners, most significantly Hartford Public Schools and Connecticut Children's.

**Monika Nelson**, Ph.D., MBA, RN-BC,  
adjunct clinical faculty

**Sophia Sopczneski**, MSN, RN,  
adjunct clinical faculty

**Hsinfen Tu**, MSN, RN, clinical instructor

## CEIN Program Alumna Inspires Nurses of All Abilities on a Nontraditional Path



Runkel at Stamford Hospital during her clinical training. "Lindsey has high professional standards, is motivated to master all challenges presented, and is eager to always do her best. It was a pleasure having Lindsey as my student."

"I have never experienced a patient not wanting me to take care of them," Runkel says. "I have had patients ask about my wheelchair, but I think in some

**"I have had patients ask about my wheelchair, but I think in some ways it is comforting to them to have someone like me taking care of them."**

For the past two years, our news feeds have emphasized the adversity nurses have faced during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was especially challenging for the newest nurses who graduated right before the virus arrived in the U.S.

Certificate Entry into Nursing program alumna Lindsey Runkel '19 (NUR), '17 (BGS) graduated on Dec. 16, 2019, started her first nursing job on Jan. 21, 2020, at Yale New Haven Hospital, and adjusted on the fly when Covid-19 reached Connecticut in early March. It was a whirlwind for Runkel, who worked on the transplant floor at the time, but it exposed her to a variety of patients early on in her career.

"We became a catch-all floor, as they all did," she says. "We ended up taking

some oncology patients, gynecology patients, stabilized trauma patients. Everyone became a nurse of everything, in a sense."

Those first few months were not only a learning experience for Runkel, but for her supervisors as well, as she is the only paraplegic nurse at the hospital. Runkel injured her back in a mountain biking accident a few years ago and later went on to fulfill her dream of being a nurse, first through the CEIN program at UConn's Stamford campus and then in New Haven.

"Lindsey demonstrates empathy, compassion, and kindness for all her patients and their families," says assistant clinical instructor Dolores Coyle-Feliciano, MSN, RN, who taught

ways it is comforting to them to have someone like me taking care of them—someone who has a differing ability or has gone through something traumatic and is still working and getting out there every day. I get to forge a different connection with people than everyone else does; to some degree, that is a very special part of what I am doing."

Runkel's story has also inspired current and future nurses in wheelchairs around the country. She says several have contacted her, seeking advice.

"I met with one woman and her teachers over Zoom," she says. "I believe they also reached out to UConn to figure out how we made my classes possible."

Runkel is hopeful the culture and acceptance of nurses like her will

continue to shift, and says she knows it will come as people like her continue to work in the field and be successful.

“What I have learned over eight years is that people really do not know your ability,” she says. “I am highly functional for being in a chair and I am arguably more functional than some people—I work out daily.”

In October 2021, Runkel transferred from the transplant floor at her hospital to the intensive care unit, which she says has always been her dream role—even if she graduated high school believing she was not “science smart.”

“I originally studied psychology, as I am a little more on the artsy side, but I

did not enjoy it,” she says. “In my third year of college I decided on nursing. I started doing the prerequisites and then was hurt. I realized coming back that the best course of action was to finish the prerequisites under a general studies degree and then go into the CEIN program from there.”

Despite the intensity of the one-year accelerated program, Runkel says she thrived. She liked being busy and growing close with her professors and the 27 classmates in her Stamford campus cohort. She says it is a bond they will have for life.

“That was the most rewarding thing, having this tight-knit group of people

to fall back on or study with,” she says. “Two of my professors texted me the other day because they saw a news article posted somewhere with my picture. I was talking to them about how I’m doing and then later that day I pulled into the parking lot at work and in the spot next to me was one of the people from my class. Even if we were not the best of friends in school, we still have that connection.”

The people in Runkel’s life are what keeps her going, she says, especially during the pandemic. Her friends, her hobbies—yes, she still mountain bikes—and her goals help her maintain her love of nursing, even on the days she feels burnt out. She says she eventually wants to go back to school to become a nurse practitioner or earn her doctorate, or even study nurse anesthesia.

“The really good thing about nursing is there are so many directions you can take it,” she says. “You have the ability to work at the bedside even if you have an advanced degree. There is always somewhere to go with it. You can find a role that fits your life. It is one of the most hopeful parts of nursing.”

The ability to always find hope has served Runkel well, both in her personal and professional life. She wants current UConn School of Nursing students to find joy in the field like she has and encourages them to find the path that they are passionate about because it will make all the difference after a long shift.

“Do not settle on a specialty based on what others tell you,” Runkel says to prospective nurses. “Do what you love; you can go straight into a pediatrician’s office or an ICU. It is a tough field, and it can be stressful, but if you love what you do, at the end of the day, it is rewarding.”

## In Celebration of Women’s Philanthropy, Nurses Lead the Way

When UConn’s Women and Philanthropy program launched its 100 Women Giving \$100,000+ initiative, it was nurses who led the way in this celebration of female philanthropists and allies who support any area of the University. Anne Harrington ’89 (NUR), Bertie Chuong ’82 MS, and Nancy Miner ’73 (NUR), ’78 MS are among the nursing alumnae to earn recognition as part of this initiative.

Harrington says it was a natural decision to give back to the School that gave her so much. After working in a hospital setting, she worked as a community health nurse for the Visiting Nurse Association of Boston, where she discovered her passion. She worked for two startup home care agencies before branching out to cofound a new company in 1999, providing nurse assessments and ongoing elder care coordination primarily in the long-term care insurance industry.



Anne Harrington '89 (NUR)

# WOMEN AND PHILANTHROPY

When Harrington and her partner sold the business in 2016, she reflected on her career path and how she got to where she is—and realized UConn played a big role.

“A large part [of my success] was due to my experience at the School of Nursing,” Harrington says. She established a bequest to create the Anne M. Harrington Scholarship, which will provide support for full-time undergraduates in the School of Nursing. “I had student loans and worked through college, and I wanted to share my success to alleviate some stress for undergraduates in the same situation,” she says.

For Chuong, it is a lifelong love of learning that inspired her to give to UConn’s School of Nursing.

“There is no shortage of things to learn about in life, and my two years at UConn were fabulous learning years,” Chuong says. “One dean after another has provided ever-improving leadership at the School of Nursing, and UConn gave me a really good feeling for nursing in the state.”

After a career focused on critical care, Chuong says she “was challenged to stimulate [her] brain” by going back to school for her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree, which she earned in 2016. She then went into nursing education, combining her love of nursing with a passion for education.

Chuong says the pandemic, while horrible, has forced educators to think about doing things differently through technology—and that is a good thing for UConn, as it inspires innovative thinking for the program that will benefit the School beyond the pandemic.

“Simulation, for example, is something I have been so keen on ever since the first robot I saw, and I was in awe the last time I was in UConn’s simulation lab,” she says. “I think it will be a real teaching method in the future—as close to hands-on training as you can possibly get.”

Chuong established the Bertie Chuong Endowed Fund for Nursing to provide support for cutting-edge technology at the School of Nursing. Another benefit to this type of learning? According to Chuong, “It is fun. Our learning needs

**MEET LINDSEY RUNKEL**

**GRADUATION YEAR AND PROGRAM:**  
Class of 2019, Certificate Entry into Nursing program;  
Class of 2017, Bachelor of General Studies

**CURRENT EMPLOYER:**  
Yale New Haven Hospital

**NURSING SPECIALTY:**  
Intensive Care Unit

**FAVORITE UCONN MEMORY:**  
“My UConn professors were amazing. They were passionate about our education and about nursing itself. They had great stories about their time at the bedside. I could not have done it without them.”

**HOBBIES:**  
Mountain biking, ice hockey, skiing, exercise

**ADVICE TO CURRENT STUDENTS:**  
“Do not let your knowledge lapse. The best way to go about learning nursing is to understand why things are happening, not just understanding concepts. If somebody is in a certain disease state, knowing what is going on and why really makes nursing make more sense.”

to have fun with it, to be creative and innovative. UConn is already a jump ahead.”

Miner gives to UConn as a way to express appreciation for the School that set her on her career path.

“If it was not for the School of Nursing, I would not be doing what I’m doing,” she says. “I have the deepest gratitude.”

Miner devoted her professional life to psychiatric nursing, working in hospitals and as a surveyor in Connecticut and beyond. She has also taught at UConn’s School of Nursing and other nursing programs around the state, and in 2017 she started her own consulting business.

“Sometimes I’m asked about retiring,” Miner says. “But this is a gift that I have to help all these people with serious mental illnesses. Why would I stop doing that?”

Miner was already contributing to a nursing scholarship when she decided she wanted to do something more for the School of Nursing. She established the Miner Bell Foundation Endowment for Nursing to provide support for faculty and students specifically in the area of psychiatric nursing. She hopes



Bertie Chuong '82 MS



“I wanted to support this area because the mentally ill are the most disenfranchised people in our nation, yet there are not enough psychiatric nurse practitioners.”

— Nancy Miner '73 (NUR), '78 MS

that this endowment will make a real difference for UConn students interested in psychiatric nursing, who will then go out and make a difference in the world.

“I wanted to support this area because the mentally ill are the most disenfranchised people in our nation, yet there are not enough psychiatric nurse practitioners,” Miner says. “These patients need help the most and I am happy to be able to help with that.”

Though not a nurse herself, Karen Maguire '68 (CLAS), '71 MA, '81 Ph.D. also supports UConn’s School of Nursing. Maguire says that UConn empowered her to invent her own program as a student, studying topics ranging from English and modern languages to political science and economics.

“UConn was very good to me in so many different ways,” she says. “The University allowed me to pursue a really interesting education.”

When considering how best to give back to the University, Maguire says she chose to support the School of Nursing because she understands the importance of educating future generations of nurses.

“I am painfully aware of the shortage of doctors, nurses, and med techs that we have today, especially after Covid-19,” Maguire says. “I want to make sure there is a steady supply [of nurses].”

Maguire contributes to the Nursing Scholarship Fund and the School of Nursing Dean’s Fund, and says she was not surprised to hear about the generosity of nurses such as Harrington, Miner, and Chuong.

“Nurses understand how important [giving back] is, just as I understand it as a patient,” she says.

Harrington, Miner, and Chuong agree. Harrington says it is in the nature of

nurses to want to help others.

“Nurses are giving people, we are caring,” she says. “We are also an intelligent group of problem solvers. Fortunately for institutions, we can give back. It speaks a lot to our profession. We are not just bedside nurses. We are innovators and we are leaders.”

Miner says giving is just what nurses do. “We are caregivers. We are always going to step up to the plate when there is a need.”

“It does not surprise me, but it does amaze me,” Chuong says. “Nursing salaries are not where they need to be, but nurses are committed, and once they commit to something they will figure it out.”

“I want the School of Nursing to continue to improve; I want to make sure that the University continues to succeed,” Harrington says. “It is not just about giving money; it is about supporting an organization that gave you so much and making sure they maintain that level of excellence.”

*To learn more about the UConn Foundation’s Women and Philanthropy program and how you can get involved, please visit [www.foundation.uconn.edu/women-philanthropy/](http://www.foundation.uconn.edu/women-philanthropy/).*

## 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](mailto:bsalustri@foundation.uconn.edu).



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For more information, visit [plannedgiving.uconn.edu](http://plannedgiving.uconn.edu).

# 2021 Faculty and Student Publications

**This is only a selection of our faculty and student research publications from 2021. For the full list of publications from the past year, visit [nursing.uconn.edu/about/office-of-the-dean/unison](https://nursing.uconn.edu/about/office-of-the-dean/unison).**

## Advanced Practice and Acute Care

**Alexander, I. M., Bowka, L., Hannafon, F., Lake, A., Williams, K., Woodburn, M.** (2021). Introducing the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research multistakeholder group secondary fracture prevention recommendations: Nurse practitioners play an important role. *Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*. doi:10.1097/JXX.0000000000000616

**Babkair, L., Chyun, D., Dickson, V. V., & Almekhlafi, M. A.** (2022). The effect of psychosocial factors and functional independence on poststroke depressive symptoms: A cross-sectional study. *Journal of Nursing Research*, 2022, 30:e189. doi:10.1097/JNR.0000000000000464.

**Maguire, B., O'Neill, B., Maniscalco, P., Phelps, S., Gerard, D., Kirkwood, S., Dean, S., & Handal, K.** (2021, September 21). Personal protective equipment for emergency medical services; research and system needs. *Journal of Emergency Medical Services*. <https://www.jems.com/operations/equipment-gear/personal-protective-equipment-for-emergency-medical-services>.

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**Beck, C. T.** (2021). Subsequent childbirth after a previous birth trauma: A metaphor analysis. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 42(10), 909-916.

**Beck, C. T.** (2021). Mothering twins during the first year of life: A metaphor analysis. *Journal of Perinatal Education*, 30(2), 89-97.

**Bryanton, J., Beck, C. T., & Morrison, S.** (2021). When fear surrounding childbirth leads women to request a planned cesarean birth. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*. DOI:10.1177/01939459211010192

**Casavant, S. G., Meegan, T., Fleming, M., Hussain, N., Gork, S., & Cong, X.** (2021). Integrated review of the assessment of newborns with neonatal abstinence syndrome. *JOGNN*, S0884-2175(21)00089-7. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jogn.2021.04.014> IF: 1.716.

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**Gyamfi, A., O'Neill, B., Henderson, W. A., & Lucas, R.** (2021). Black/African American breastfeeding experience: cultural, sociological, and health dimensions through an equity lens. *Breastfeeding Medicine*, 16(2),103-111.

**Amoo, T. B., & Lucas, R.** (2021). Promoting the practice of exclusive breastfeeding: a philosophic scoping review. *Research Square* (preprint).

**McKenna, L. L., Bellini, S., Whalen, M., Magri, E., Akerman, M.** (2021, September 30). Implementing an evidence-based feeding protocol. *Advances in Neonatal Care* doi:10.1097/ANC.0000000000000923.

**Moriarty Daley, A., Polifroni, E.C. & Sadler, L.** (2021). Here I don't feel like a stranger: Adolescents' perspectives on school based health centers. *Journal of School Nursing*

**Vignato, J., Beck, C. T., Conley, V., Inman, M., Patsais, M., & Segre, L.** (2021). The lived experience of pain and depression symptoms during pregnancy. *Maternal Child Nursing*, 46(4), 198-204.

## Chronic Disease Management

**Joseph, J. J., Deedwania, P., Acharya, T., Aguilar, D., Bhatt, D. L., Chyun, D. A., DiPalo, K. E., Golden, S. H., Sperling, L. S.,** on behalf of the American Heart Association Diabetes Committee of the council on Lifestyle and Cardiometabolic Health; Council on Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology; Council on Clinical Cardiology; and Council on Hypertension. (2022). Comprehensive management of

cardiovascular risk factors for adults with type 2 diabetes: A scientific statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*, 145:e722-e759. <https://doi.org/10.1161/CIR.0000000000001040>.

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## Education and Culture

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**Van Hoof, T. J., Sumeracki, M. A., & Madan, C. R.** (2021). Science of learning strategy series: Article 1, distributed practice. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, 41(1), 59-62.

**Verkuyll, M., MacKenna, V., & St-Amant, O.** (2021). Using self-debrief after a virtual simulation: The process. *Clinical Simulation in Nursing*, 57, 48-52.

## Genomics, Genetic Research, and Precision Nursing

**Alemán, J., Henderson, W., Walker, J., Ronning, A., Jones, D., Walter, P., Daniel, S., Bittinger, K., Vaughan, R., MacArthur, R., Chen, K., Breslow, J., & Holt, P.** (2021). Excess dietary fructose does not alter gut microbiota or permeability in humans: A pilot randomized controlled study. *Journal of Clinical and Translational Science*, 5, e143, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cts.2021.801>

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## Mental Health

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42(3), 756-766. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gerinurse.2021.03.021>

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## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW FELLOWS

Every year, various professional organizations select fellows who have gone above and beyond in nursing or other medical fields. The School of Nursing is proud to congratulate our faculty and alumni who were selected for fellowships this past year:

### FACULTY:

#### Wendy Henderson

American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases

#### Annette Jakubisin-Konicki

American Academy of Nursing

### ALUMNAE:

#### Jaclyn Conelius '10 Ph.D.

American Academy of Nursing

#### Olga Jarrin Montaner '02 (NUR), '07 MS, '11 Ph.D.

American Academy of Nursing

#### Dorothy Vittner '16 Ph.D.

American Academy of Nursing

Wilson, J., Sevi, B., Strough, J., & **Shook, N. J.** (2021). Age differences in risk taking: Now you see them, now you don't. *Aging, Neuropsychology, and Cognition*. Springer

### Nursing Profession

**Hahn, J., Galuska, L., Polifroni, E. C., & Dunnack, H.** (2021). Joy and meaning in nurse manager practice: A narrative analysis. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 51(1), 38-42.

**Redeker, N. S.** (2021a). Addressing health inequity through nursing science. *Nursing Outlook*, 69(3), 491-493.

**Redeker, N. S.** (2021b). Building on the legacy of nursing science to address emerging health care needs: "Either-or" or "And-Both"? *Nursing Outlook*, 69(5), 930-931.

**Redeker, N. S.** (2021c). The Council for the Advancement of Nursing Science is committed to the career development of nurse scientists. *Nursing Outlook*, 69(1), 116-117.

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nation's health: A "career-span" approach. *Nursing Outlook*, 69(2), 246-248.

**Redeker, N. S., Rawl, S. M., & Nwanaji-Enwerem, U.** (2021). Expanding the pipeline of nurse scientists to address the health care needs of a diverse society. *Nursing Outlook*, 69(4), 704-706.

**Zipf, A., Polifroni, E., & Beck, C.** (2021). The experience of the nurse during the COVID-19 pandemic: A global meta-synthesis in the year of the nurse. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 54, 92-103. DOI: 10.1111/jnu.12706.

### Pain and Symptom Management

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**Judge, M. P., Kuzoian, C., Lucas, R., Wu, J., Maitland, K., & Delaney, C.** (2021). Needs assessment to inform and improve educational practices surrounding omega-3

consumption during pregnancy. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 25(2),192-197.

**Parekh de Campos, A., & Walsh, S.** (2021). Nurses' degree of comfort in caring for palliative and hospice patients: A national survey. *MEDSURG Nursing*, 30(6), 365-372.

Rosa, W.E., **Parekh de Campos, A.**, Abedini, N.C., Gray, T.F., Huijter, H.A., Bhadelia, A., Boit, J.M., Byiringiro, S., Crisp, N., Dahlin, C., Davidson, P.M., Davis, Sh. De Lima, L., Farmer, P.E., Ferrell, B.R., Hategekimana, V., Karanja, V., Knaul, F.M., Kpoh, J.D.N., Lusaka, J., Matula, S.T., McMahon, C., Meghani, S.H., Moreland, P.J., Ntizimira, C., Radbruch, L., Rajagopal, M.R., & Downing, J. (2021). Optimizing the global nursing workforce to ensure universal palliative care access and alleviate serious health-related suffering worldwide. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2021.07.014>

Saravanan, L., & **Reagan, L.** (2021). A biobehavioral pain hygiene model: Narrative review and conceptualization. *Topics in Pain Management*, 36(12), 1-12.

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**Srisopa, P. & Lucas, R.** (2021). Women's experience of pelvic girdle pain after giving birth: A meta-synthesis. *Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health*, 66(2), 240-248.

### Research Methods and Theory

Kim, K., **Parekh de Campos, A.**, & Choi, S. (2021). A Vax4HPN mobile application for parents of human papillomavirus vaccine-eligible children: Iterative formative assessments. *Computers, Informatics, Nursing*. <https://doi.org/10.1097/CIN.0000000000000832>

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Fucito, L. M., Ash, G. I., DeMartini, K. S., Pittman, B., Barnett, N. P., Li, C. R., **Redeker, N. S.**, & O'Malley, S. S. (2021). A multimodal mobile sleep intervention for young adults engaged in risky drinking: Protocol for a randomized controlled Trial. *JMIR Research Protocols*, 10(2), e26557.

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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/info-for-alumni/alumni-news](https://nursing.uconn.edu/info-for-alumni/alumni-news)

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### Nancy Redeker, Continued from page 29

"I enjoy sharing what I know and helping the next generation," says Redeker, who has served as a research mentor for over 20 postdoctoral fellows and early career scholars.

She is a member of the Board of the Directors of the American Academy of Nursing and the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine Foundation. She previously served as chair of the Council for Advancement of Nursing Science, nursing's leading scientific body. She is editor-in-chief of *Heart & Lung: the Journal of Cardiopulmonary and Acute Care*, and serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Behavioral Sleep Medicine* and *Sleep Medicine Reviews*.

"These positions have helped me keep my finger on what is going on nationally, but also allowed me to help guide the direction of nursing research, as well as learn about major health care needs across the country," Redeker says. "I have also learned a lot about the research process, which has helped my own grant writing and understanding of the direction research should take, as well as how I can help

others do the same."

Redeker is currently the principal investigator of two studies funded by the National Institutes of Health: a U01-funded study on opioid use disorder and sleep, and an R01-funded study titled "RISE-UP," which is a randomized controlled trial designed to test the effects of continuous positive airway treatment on function in stroke survivors.

Over the past six years, she has been a principal investigator, co-investigator, or mentor on 58 extramural grants. She has published more than 150 peer-reviewed manuscripts, 19 book chapters, 120 peer-reviewed abstracts, and has been invited to present on her research at major scientific conferences around the world. She has served on 25 scientific review committees at the national and international level. And she provided service to the profession in more than a dozen leadership roles in different societies and consulted with over 15 academic institutions.

"I hope the entire University will join me in welcoming Dr. Redeker to UConn Nation and our community of researchers," Chyun says. **U**



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