

# Longhorn Nursing

Volume Twelve

THE FUTURE OF NURSING STARTS HERE

Fall 2023

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**Welcome**  
**Dean Eun-Ok Im**  
UT Austin School  
of Nursing Welcomes  
its 4th Dean

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The University of Texas at Austin  
School of Nursing

# A message from Dean Eun-Ok Im



at the UT Austin School of Nursing. It's wonderful to see familiar faces and know I'm where I belong.

Former Dean Alexa Stuifbergen made many positive, impactful changes during her deanship, and in my absence, I often heard of amazing things generated by the School of Nursing. Now we have many opportunities to build on what she has established.

I have returned to the School because of its well-known, ongoing contributions to nursing education, practice and research. I enter this role with many goals in mind, but two stand out as priorities: increasing our grant funding through the National Institutes of Health and

Greetings Longhorn Nursing family and friends. It is an honor to return to The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing, and an exciting time for me as I begin to serve as dean. I am thrilled to be back at home in Austin and

increasing our national and global rankings. The School of Nursing is already one of the leading nursing schools in the nation. Across the U.S. and internationally, people know that this is a top school, but there is great potential for us to continue to climb in our rankings and increase our international visibility.

In the U.S. and worldwide, the past few years have shown that health care is at an inflection point. The School of Nursing prepares outstanding students for rewarding careers, with high potential as contributors and leaders to the future of health care and nursing research. Our clinical and research faculty do an outstanding job of teaching our students, and I look forward to collaborating with them to continue to improve the School and the future of nursing.

We are a strong, extraordinary community of high-achieving students, exceptional faculty, dedicated staff, as well as supportive and generous alumni and friends — all committed to addressing health care challenges through education, research and service. I invite all of you to join me in this new chapter at the School of Nursing. Together, we can continue to build upon the best of our School and our profession and change the world.

Eun-Ok Im, PhD, MPH, RN, CNS, FAAN

Dean, The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing  
Professor and Laura Lee Blanton Chair in Nursing



EDUCATION, RESEARCH, SERVICE

LONGHORN NURSING  
Volume 12

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Longhorn Nursing magazine is a publication of  
The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing.  
It is produced once a year using private funds.

Feedback welcome. Please contact us at  
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# UT Austin School of Nursing Welcomes Dean Eun-Ok Im

**I**n September 2023, UT Austin welcomed back Eun-Ok Im, PhD, MPH, RN, CNS, FAAN, to serve in her new role as dean of the School of Nursing. Im is an internationally recognized nurse researcher with groundbreaking contributions in nursing science and oncology nursing.

“UT Austin was my home institution from 2002 to 2011, and I am thrilled to be back to further champion the mission and success of one of the top nursing schools in the nation,” Im said.

Im has returned to Texas after serving as the senior associate dean for research and innovation and the Edith Folsom Honeycutt Endowed Chair in the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing at Emory University in Atlanta, as the associate dean for Research Development and Regulatory Affairs and the Mary T. Champagne Professor at Duke University, and as the Marjorie

O. Rendell Endowed Chair at Penn Nursing. Before that, from 2007 to 2011, she was the La Quinta Motor Inns, Inc. Centennial Professor in Nursing at UT Austin.

Her research career began after a tragic incident while she was working as an oncology nurse in South Korea.

At that time, Im had a patient with terminal-stage pancreatic cancer who was approaching the end of life. Although he was receiving opioids for his extreme pain, he never complained about his pain. When the nurses walked past his room, they assumed he was doing OK, even though he looked solemn and they knew that he must be suffering.

The patient was located in a special care unit, near the top of the hospital building, that was reserved for VIPs and other important figures. One day, he asked to be moved to a single suite, which was usually reserved for patients

like the president of Korea or other high-ranking dignitaries, and the nurses agreed because they knew he was reaching the end of life and wished for a peaceful time with his family. As soon as he was relocated, he asked his wife to run some errands for him. Once he was alone, he used a large chair in the hospital room to break a window, and he jumped to his death.

“It was a disaster,” Im said. “As an oncology nurse, I wasn’t working that shift. I didn’t witness it, but when I came back the next day, the police were there, and everybody was shocked. We talked about it over and over again.”

The nurses concluded that the patient’s cultural beliefs and values likely led him to think of suicide. Korean culture tends to emphasize a stoic view of pain, such that patients may endure it without showing their feelings or complaining. One Korean proverb states that men should not express

pain or emotions, or even cry: Men should cry only three times in their lives — at birth, when their parents die and when their country collapses. Im’s patient hid his pain and never complained, but in the end, it was too much for him to bear.

Im says that it is important to educate individuals about pain, to inform them about pain medication and let them know that it is natural to experience pain.

“We should respect cultural values, but in terms of health and well-being, there’s a line that we should cross to intervene and prevent cultural values and beliefs from making people suffer,” she added.

After that tragic accident, Im knew she wanted to make a difference, and so she began her research career with the goal to develop interventions specifically for Asian Americans. She developed internet and computer technology to address ethnic disparities in women’s health. Her metatheoretical approach — situation specific theory — has become a basis for nursing interventions for underrepresented ethnic minority women.

**Im returned to the School of Nursing because of its well-known ongoing contributions to nursing education, practice and research.**

Im’s research career has included 74 funded studies totaling \$190 million over the past 25 years, and she has been the principal investigator on many major National Institutes of Health (NIH) projects. She has shared the results of her research in over 450 publications, and she has served on editorial review boards and on research review panels for the NIH, the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute and the American Heart Association. She served as a member of the NIH National Advisory Council for Nursing Research, as well. Currently, she is the editor-in-chief for *Advances in Nursing Science*.

Over the years, Im has received multiple national and international awards, including the 2014 International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame Award from Sigma



On Sept. 1, 2023, UT Austin welcomed back Dr. Eun-Ok Im to serve in her new role as dean of the School of Nursing.

Theta Tau International, the Council for the Advancement of Nursing Science 2020 Outstanding Nurse Scientist Award, the Southern Nursing Research Society Distinguished Research Award, the 2022 Faye Glenn Abdellah Leadership Award from the Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) and the 2023 Oncology Nursing Society Distinguished Researcher Award. In 2019, she took part in the NINR Director’s Lecturer Series, which brings the nation’s top nurse scientists to the NIH campus to share their work and interests with a cross-disciplinary audience.

A globally recognized role model in doctoral education, Im received the 2019 Global Mentor Award from the International Network for Doctoral Education in Nursing and the 2021 Duck Hee Kang Mentor Award from the Global Korean Nursing Foundation. She has taught courses on nursing theory, nursing philosophy, critical literature review, research methods and issues for global women’s health. In the years 2020 and 2021, she was president of the Asian American/Pacific Islander Nurses Association.

Im returned to the School of Nursing because of its well-known ongoing contributions to nursing education, practice and research. She enters this role with many goals in mind. One goal at the top

of her list is to increase the School’s grant funding from the NIH. Passionate about research, Im wants to see faculty reach their research goals and receive the funds they need for those efforts. This will also increase the School’s rank among other top institutions for grant funding, which will subsequently attract outstanding students and significantly improve the prestige of the School.

In addition, Im wants to improve the School’s national and global rankings. The School of Nursing is already one of the leading nursing schools in the nation, with a strong history of excellence in academics, research and service, but it could still be ranked higher. Internationally, people are aware of the School of Nursing and they know it’s a top school, but improvement is still possible.

The School of Nursing recognizes the growing demand for highly qualified nurses in leadership roles, clinical care, teaching and research, and Im is prepared to help continue moving the School forward in preparing our future Texas Nurse leaders.

“Through my role as dean, I know we will strengthen our research and clinical efforts to advance nursing science, which will create life-changing opportunities for our students — ultimately providing better care for all,” Im said.



# WHAT STARTS HERE

## STARTS WITH YOU



UT Austin's What Starts Here campaign has the overall goal of raising \$6 billion to support the University's future. This is the largest campaign goal of any state-funded higher educational institution in Texas to date. The School of Nursing has set its goal to raise \$50 million during this 10-year campaign, now in its eighth year.

At the School of Nursing, our goal is to become one of the world's most innovative learning and research environments as we prepare our nursing graduates to engage individuals and organizations in initiatives for person-centered care and needed change. To achieve this ambitious goal, the support of our alumni and friends is critical. With the help of their dollars, we can meet the needs of our students and faculty.

Our goal of raising at least \$12 million for student support during the campaign has now secured \$10.6 million. Nursing students are continuing to benefit from these funds through endowed scholarships and graduate fellowships, as well as non-endowed funds to support their emergency financial needs. In addition to supporting our students, we want to broaden our robust recruitment, retention and development of faculty. To date, the School of Nursing has raised \$4.8 million for faculty support.

At the School of Nursing, we strive to provide students and faculty with the best environment for learning and work. When the campaign began, there was a critical need to renovate and modernize our 1970s-era building to support both students and faculty. During Summer 2023, contributions from our alumni and friends allowed us to complete several classroom updates and various facilities improvements.

The School of Nursing also continues

its efforts to generate support for our two nurse-managed clinics, the Family Wellness Center and the Children's Wellness Center, as well as the recently developed Social Resource Center at the Children's Wellness Center. In addition to serving Central Texas communities, the clinics provide a training environment for nursing students to gain valuable clinical experience. The Social Resource Center helps meet basic essential needs for community members who need additional support, which you can read more about in this issue.

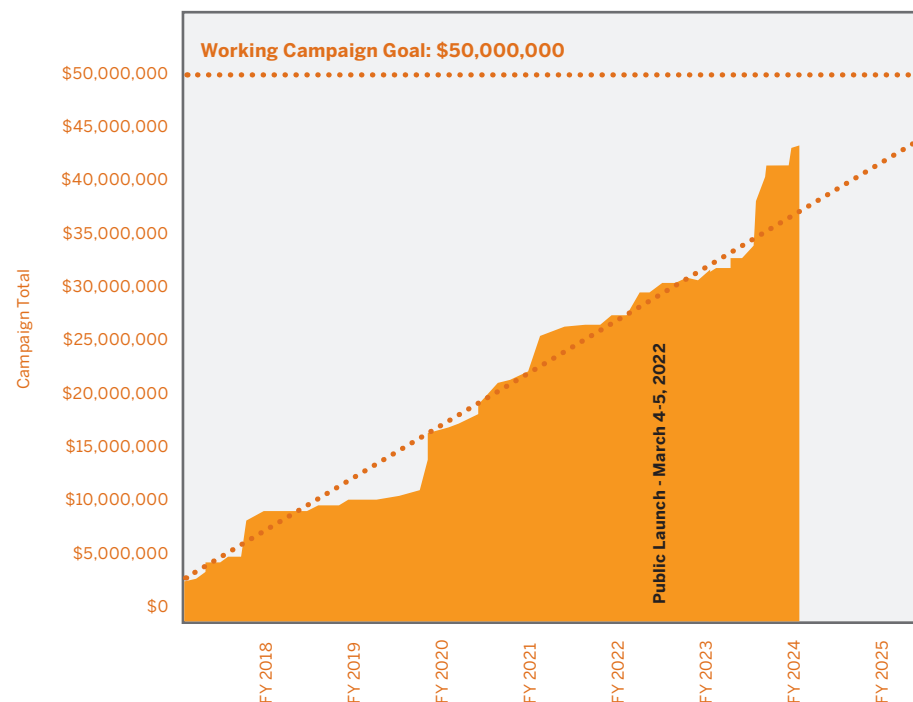
When the campaign started in 2016, we knew we could not move forward with our dreams for the School of Nursing without the continuous generosity of our alumni and friends. Gifts of all kinds are deeply

appreciated as we continue to move closer to our goal. At this time, we have raised a total of \$42.9 million during the What Starts Here campaign, and we are so grateful for those who have given during this campaign to bring us where we are now. The support of our students, faculty, facilities and programs are all important, and your investments will help the School of Nursing now and in the future.

If you would like to contribute to the What Starts Here campaign, we invite you to visit with us (contact Sergio Delgado, chief development officer: [sdelgado@nursing.utexas.edu](mailto:sdelgado@nursing.utexas.edu)) and learn more about how you can change the world and improve the future of health care by helping to educate tomorrow's Texas nurse leaders.

## Cumulative Campaign Progress

As of 9-28-2023



## Leaving a Legacy:

# Dean Alexa Stuifbergen



Over her 14 years as dean of the School of Nursing, Alexa Stuifbergen, PhD, RN, FAAN, has strengthened the School's reputation and impact as one of the nation's leading nursing schools. The first native Texan and UT Austin alumna to serve as the School's dean, she received her PhD in nursing from UT Austin, MSN from UT El Paso and BSN from Creighton University in Omaha.

Stuifbergen is the James R. Dougherty Jr. Centennial Professor in the School of Nursing, and, during her time as dean, she also held the Laura Lee Blanton Chair in Nursing. She is recognized internationally for her research in health promotion and self-management for persons with chronic and disabling conditions. She has served as principal investigator on National Institutes of Health (NIH) research and center grants totaling over \$11.8 million, as co-investigator on research projects funded for over \$14.5 million, and as project director for service and training

grants of \$3.5 million. During her time as dean, the faculty of the School of Nursing secured more than \$60 million in federal and state research grants.

Stuifbergen is a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing and has served on and led numerous national committees for the Rehabilitation Nursing Foundation, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and the NIH. She was chair of the Nursing and Related Clinical Sciences Scientific Review Group from 2011 to 2013, and she served as a member of the NIH National Advisory Council for Nursing Research from 2014 to 2019. In 2017, she was inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Researcher Hall of Fame.

Under her leadership, from 2009 through this summer of 2023, a total of 3,212 students graduated from the School of Nursing, for an average of 230 new nurses each year.

During her tenure, Stuifbergen recruited outstanding faculty nationally, and she has launched several new

academic programs. With the help of generous donors, she has directed major renovations to the School's facilities, including the building's new entrance, the Myrtle E. and Earl E. Walker Lobby and the Walker Terrace, along with extensive improvements to classrooms and public spaces that support more flexible teaching and learning.

Development efforts led by Stuifbergen generated over \$57 million through the end of her tenure, including transformational gifts to establish the Ascension Seton Chair in Clinical Nursing Research, the St. David's Foundation Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention in Underserved Populations and the Luci Baines Johnson and Ian J. Turpin Center for Gerontological Nursing. In addition, 66 new endowments and 39 estate gifts have been established to support programs, faculty and students. Stuifbergen is especially proud of the establishment of the Alexa K. Stuifbergen Endowed Professorship in Nursing Research, which was supported by many donors, faculty and friends of the School.



Dr. Mary Wakefield

## Up to the Task: Mary Wakefield Helps Revamp the CDC

For over 70 years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been the nation's leading science-based, data-driven service organization that protects the public's health. In August of 2022, at the request of Dr. Rochelle Walensky, former director of the CDC, Visiting Professor Mary Wakefield, PhD, RN, FAAN, stepped in as her senior counselor to revamp the CDC.

According to Wakefield, this role

was specifically created to help the CDC strengthen its operations and processes, with the aim of improving the agency's ability to meet its mission, not just for today but for the future. As with any organization, there are always opportunities to improve performance.

"Implementing strategies to effectively assess and realign agency operations, processes and policies to meet changing needs and expectations should be an ongoing effort — the CDC is no different," Wakefield said.

Wakefield is a renowned trailblazer and advocate, with a tremendous impact on health policy through her roles in high-profile federal government positions. She has built a distinguished career across the country and the world.

Wakefield's nursing background has always been foundational to her work in public health policy, including the implementation of health programs. At the School of Nursing, she earned both her master's (1978) and doctoral (1985) degrees. She has used her UT Austin

education to serve the public and make a substantial difference in health care access and delivery.

"As a profession, nursing is laser focused on strengthening and supporting the health of individuals, families and communities," Wakefield said. "Everything I've done across my career, including at the CDC, has aimed for that 'north star' — to engage in this work, scanning for and understanding the obstacles that stand in the way of achieving health and working to address them is essential."

Parallel to this focus is the need to recognize opportunities for improvement and leverage them, including personnel expertise, policies and programs, and to do this as efficiently and effectively as possible. For Wakefield, this orientation fits well with strengthening federal health infrastructure and programs.

In her many years of working in public policy, Wakefield has led organizational changes in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). As the head of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), a sister agency to the CDC, she initiated several organizational improvements. Wakefield viewed her job at the HRSA as both implementing the programs she directed by law, and, equally important, working creatively to improve their impact. This was also true for her role as acting Deputy Secretary of HHS. She was appointed to both of these positions in President Obama's Administration, as the first nurse to have received this honor.

"Throughout my work in federal government, I learned from exceptional leaders and staff, partnering with them to develop a shared vision of performance improvements that would strengthen agency programs and the organizational foundation on which those programs relied," Wakefield said. "Leading at this level is about creating space for individuals with an array of expertise from across an organization to help identify and solve problems, often by creating and executing new approaches and strategies."

Over 17 years of federal service provided Wakefield with a solid foundation for understanding how government works and what levers can be used to drive change.

In her six and a half months of intensive

Wakefield is a renowned trailblazer and advocate, with a tremendous impact on health policy through her roles in high-profile federal government positions. She has built a distinguished career across the country and the world.

work with the CDC, Wakefield guided and supported several important efforts to strengthen the agency for future public health challenges by incorporating the views and expertise of leaders and other personnel across the agency.

These actions ranged from laboratory quality improvements to building out a broader, deeper emergency response workforce. Her leadership and work with others has given the CDC a clear roadmap to continue improvement and measure progress.

Wakefield has always appreciated the importance of a strong public health infrastructure, and the CDC, as the nation's

flagship public health agency, is central to this. She explained how the agency's research, laboratory expertise, programs and policy development are critical to the U.S. but also the health of people around the world. For the CDC's success, a strong, forward-leaning operational foundation is essential.

For example, Wakefield said the CDC is expected to respond 24/7 to emerging and often unanticipated health care challenges. The agency's work guides decisions made by American families, communities, health care providers including nurses and state governments. The focus of its programs spans from chronic to acute health issues, which are often highly interrelated.

"Nothing better illustrates the importance of the CDC's portfolio of programs existing side by side than the pandemic," Wakefield said. "The virus required expertise in rapid emergency response coupled with expertise in chronic conditions, given its disproportionate impact on certain populations."

This comprehensive expertise in both responding to acute health threats and minimizing impact on at-risk populations allowed the CDC to move faster and more comprehensively, even as it revealed opportunities for improvements in organizational performance.

Bottomline, Wakefield said that the CDC must be ready for emerging threats, without always knowing what shape those threats will take, where they're likely to occur, or what populations may be most at risk — even as the agency helps the nation address high-priority ongoing public health challenges. This requires harnessing new technologies and developing new infrastructure and organizational approaches in 2023 that are different from what they were in 2013 or will need to be in 2033.

"The public health experts at the CDC are world class," she said. "And just as experts in public health and in every health care field need to plan for and adapt in response to new knowledge and environmental changes around them, the organizational entities that support their work, whether in the public or private sector, need to do the same. Initiating and sustaining this kind of focused effort isn't easy, but it is essential."



# NINR Director Shannon Zenk Provides Keynote for 3rd International Indigenous Nursing Research Summit



Dr. John Lowe with NINR Director Dr. Shannon Zenk

**“It’s not like a typical research conference — in good ways,” said Elizabeth Tarlov, PhD, RN, director of the NINR’s Division of Extramural Science Programs. “In addition to learning about the science, it was a cultural experience.”**

Indigenous researchers from 10 countries — Australia, Canada, Guam, Guyana, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Taiwan, Torres Strait Islands and the U.S. — presented research findings and approaches to address the health and well-being of Indigenous populations worldwide at the 3rd International Indigenous Nursing Research Summit. Hosted by the School of Nursing, the Summit was held in November 2022 at the AT&T Hotel & Conference Center. The event provided opportunities to learn about Indigenous populations and to network with nurse researchers actively working to improve the health and lives of Indigenous peoples. Shannon N. Zenk, PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN, director of the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR), was the Summit’s keynote speaker.

“It’s not like a typical research conference — in good ways,” said Elizabeth Tarlov, PhD, RN, director of the NINR’s Division of Extramural Science Programs. “In addition to learning about the science, it was a cultural experience.”

Event leader John Lowe, PhD, RN, FAAN, Joseph Blades Centennial Memorial Professor in Nursing, said it was a great honor for the School of Nursing to host the event. To Lowe, it suggested a growing unity among Indigenous populations.

“I think many Indigenous people, especially Indigenous nurse researchers, feel isolated because we are so few,” Lowe added. “When we come together and we discuss and share what we’re doing and share the issues that we’re confronting, there’s so many similarities. Many of our health disparities and health inequities are a direct result from the colonization and the drama that occurred.”

“It’s amazing to hear how that occurred around the globe with Indigenous people, and how, when we come together, we learn more about that experience and what our approach is to help address the consequences of it,” he continued. “We learn from each other, we share, we laugh, we cry, we have this connection — there are no words to explain it — but I will say there is definitely a professional connection, but much more, there’s a spiritual connection.

It’s just an honor when we can connect with each other and develop these relationships because the root goes so much deeper than just the surface professional relationship.”

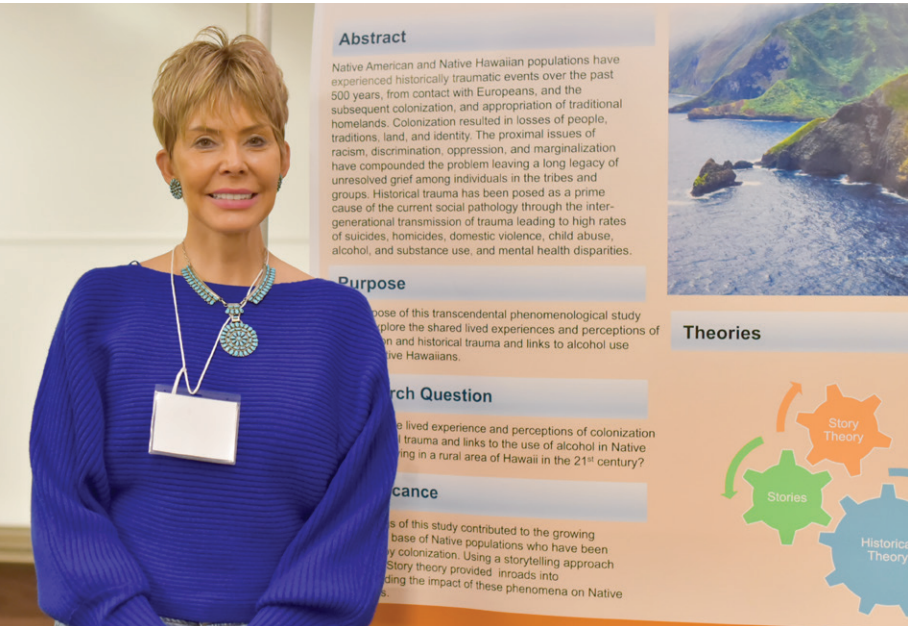
This was the largest, best attended Summit yet. Odette Best, PhD, RN, CF, FACN, FAAN, professor at the University of Southern Queensland, Australia, was one of the event’s organizers. She said that the Summits continue to grow in attendance, and each one represents a greater diversity of Indigenous nurses who participate and present their research.

“I’m hoping UT realizes the privilege they’ve had of having these amazing 150-plus participants of global Indigenous nurses, from around the world, presenting their research and their work,” Best said. “And we’re hoping it only grows from here.”

Best hopes that individuals at the conference walked away with a better understanding of the importance and crucial role that Indigenous nurses play in conducting Indigenous research.

“I think long gone, hopefully, are the days where we are researched as a people by non-Indigenous nurses and non-Indigenous researchers,” she said. “We need to be recognized and funded for the incredibly important work that Indigenous nurses do within the research space. And we hold our ground, and our research is world-leading, unique, impactful and it’s about the health of our people.”

Several attendees were students from the School of Nursing. PhD student Jason Spees presented a poster titled “Indicators of Psychological Capital Among



Dr. Cynthia Greywolf, clinical assistant professor at UT Austin School of Nursing, presented her research at the 3rd Indigenous Research Summit.

Self-Identified Indigenous Youth Experiencing Homelessness.”

“It’s been great to see the different kinds of research taking place with Indigenous peoples and what kinds of things they’re focusing on,” Spees said.

For Spees, witnessing the Indigenous researchers discuss their cultures, as well as the traumas and issues that they face made a vivid impression.

School of Nursing PhD student Nancy Blanco Arroyo said that, as researchers, we have the responsibility to follow through, not just to drop in and collect data from Indigenous populations: “If we’re going to work with Indigenous populations, we have to be very aware that we have to give back and that the data isn’t just ours but it’s also theirs.”

School of Nursing Provost’s Early Career Cohort Fellow Cynthia Greywolf, PhD, DNP-PMHNP, APRN, BC, a clinical assistant professor, presented a poster titled “Exploring Colonization, Historical Trauma and Link to Alcohol Use with Native Hawaiians in Rural Hawaii.”

Greywolf said that this was the second Indigenous Nursing Research Summit she had

attended. She enjoyed seeing the many Indigenous groups represented and hearing about their research. The Summit enabled her to interact with researchers from around the globe.

“There’s an energy that is incredibly good — an energy of connectedness,” she concluded.

The next Summit will be held in 2024 in New Zealand, with Denise Wilson, PhD, RN, FCA(NZ), FRSNZ, FAAN, from Auckland University of Technology, leading the event.

The International Indigenous Nursing Research Summit has led to the formation of a network among Indigenous nurse researchers, the Indigenous Global Research Alliance in Nursing. Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.S. have taken the lead in this endeavor, with the intent to nurture seeds for Indigenous wellness through nursing research. The Alliance is currently developing their website.

“This is the result of the work of many and not just me or one other person,” Lowe pointed out. “This is the result of the passion and the commitment by many of us who are very passionate about the work that we do. It’s a whole team and villages rather than just one person. It’s a real honor to be connected in that way and to be able to share the work.”



Research Associate Vanessa Aguillar presents her research at the International Indigenous Nursing Research Summit.

# A New Lens: Virtual Reality for Nursing Students' Learning

According to the McKinsey Report, it's been predicted that by 2025, the U.S. will have a nursing shortage of nearly 450,000, due to older nurses' retiring earlier than expected and nursing institutions' being limited in the number of students they can accept. In 2021, nearly 92,000 qualified nursing school applicants were turned away for a variety of reasons, including a lack of sufficient clinical sites and classroom space, as well as budget and resource constraints. Is it possible to retain more nurses and prepare them for practice? For many nursing education programs, virtual reality (VR) may be one way to scale up the number of new, practice-ready nurses.

At the School of Nursing, Clinical Assistant Professor Josh Thomas, DNP, RN, CNE, is incorporating VR into clinical time to increase nurse readiness for students.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 65 percent of nursing education programs were already utilizing virtual simulations. The uptake of VR is a trend that nursing educators have seen coming, and they predict the technology will power the classroom of the future. By 2025, VR is expected to achieve mainstream adoption in nursing programs across the U.S., according to research conducted by Wolters Kluwer and the National League for Nursing.

Starting out as the topic of his DNP scholarly project, Thomas wanted to use VR as a teaching adjunct to clinical time, specifically in the pre- or post-conference setting. He explained that this time can be used differently depending on the instructor, but it tends to be a time for relaxation and debriefing. Although this time is important, he believes that it is underutilized and can be used to reinforce concepts learned during clinicals. This opens an opportunity for students to use VR simulations to help increase their readiness to practice.

Thomas said there's a large gap between the students who are graduating



Dr. Joshua Thomas with nursing students.

and the expectations of employers and the work they should be able to do. This gap has led to hospitals' creating different programs to help educate and bridge the gap to prepare new nurses. Thomas hopes, through the VR simulations, that he can meet employers halfway and help bring students to the table who are better prepared to work with patients.

The School of Nursing is fortunate enough to provide enough clinical hours for students. However, Thomas said, the clinical sites are very specific and specialized, which means that some students gain a lot of experience in one area rather than a full scope in multiple areas.

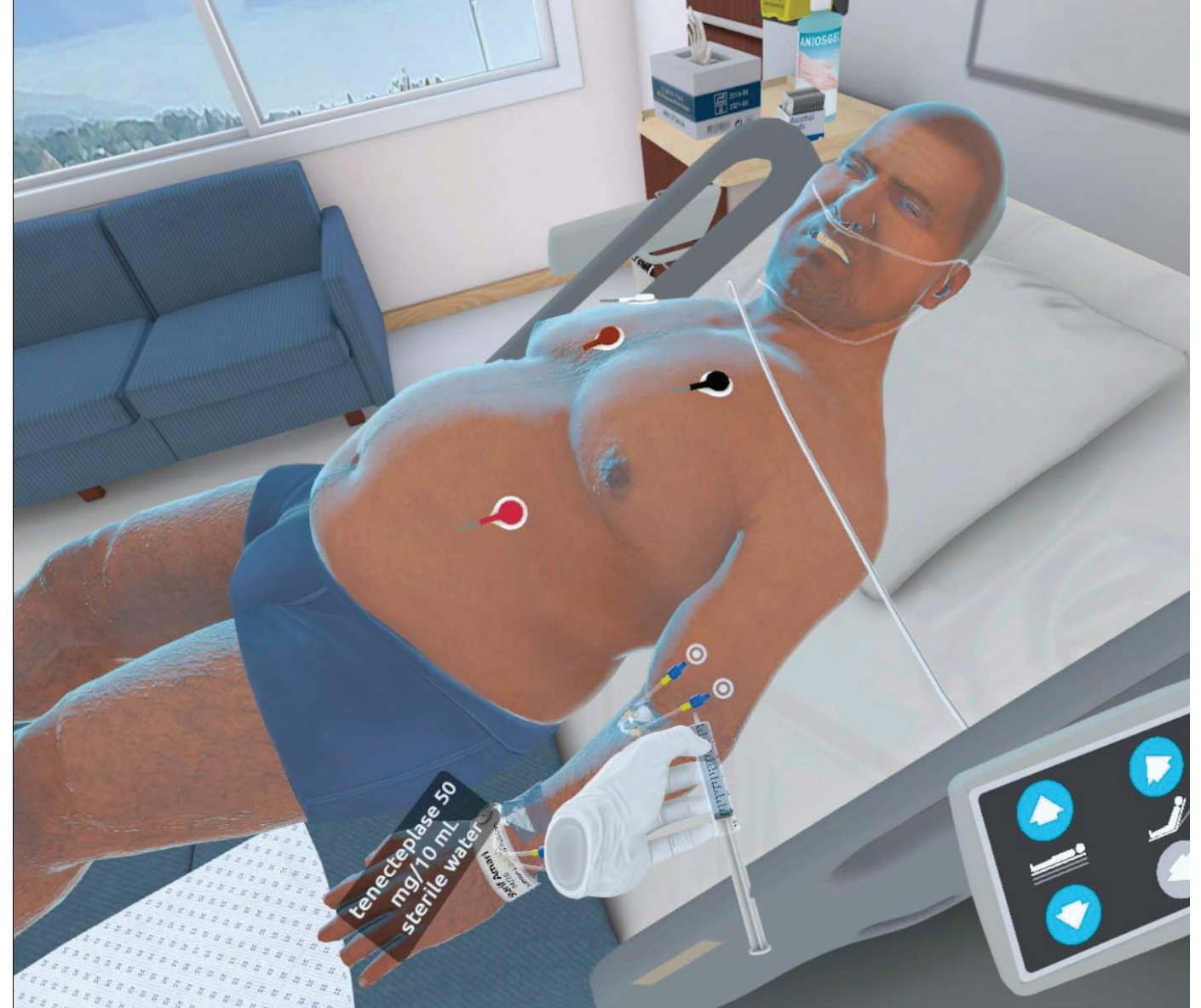
"While yes, we have the in-person simulation labs, there's only so much a mannequin can do," Thomas said. "In a virtual environment, you can see your patient and their decline from healthy to sick to in distress really quick and intervene and perform all the skills you're learning in the simulation labs."

The patients in the VR simulations are very realistic. Students can see the patient undergo skin changes; they can check their temperature and feel their

pulse and hear their heart and lungs. This also helps students practice their clinical judgment and basic safety skills.

Thomas is working with faculty to figure out how to incorporate VR in each of the settings to either help prepare for or take the place of in-person simulations. He is training faculty to use the equipment on their own so that it may become a resource for everyone.

Thomas worked with Clinical Associate Professor Leigh Goldstein, PhD, RN, ANP-BC, CEN, to obtain grant money from the Provost's Office, which started the School-wide VR initiative to incorporate VR across several courses in the curriculum. This project received a \$250,000 grant from the Provost's Office, which helped fund the acquisition of hardware. The School has a total of 18 headsets and 15 laptops to help proctor simulations. In addition, they were able to build racks and charging stations for the equipment. The costly part of the project is the cost of software licensing, \$75,000 for three years. When the time



Students enhance their clinical training with virtual simulation to increase readiness for real-life patient care.

comes, Thomas said, they will need more funding to keep the program running. The funding also covered 25 percent of Thomas' time as a faculty member.

"I think, personally, I like to see all of my students do things they enjoy and do things they love," Goldstein said. "It's been gratifying to me that I've been able to help Josh in this way. It's unusual to have a student who wants to do a project at this level, so it's been great to be able to support him and help him not just in his student role but faculty role, as well."

This style of learning is important for nurse readiness and the transition into clinical practice.

"We have great faculty and great students, and we're doing a pretty good job getting students to pass the National Council Licensure Examination on the first try, but that's really just one benchmark," Thomas said. "Students are still required to do six or

up to 10 weeks of immersive orientation and simulation labs at each of the facilities they work at.

"Another aspect is patient safety," he added. "We're not really graduating students who are ready to jump into working with patients, which we need given there's a shortage of nurses. So, this work really helps immerse students in taking care of patients that they may not get in clinicals and wouldn't get until they are in the hospitals and having to learn on the job. Hopefully, having undergone these simulations, they feel more comfortable and confident in taking care of the patients rather than just learning as they go along."

Goldstein believes the VR program is a good mechanism for students to be able to see and do things virtually before they actually go out and do it. She mentioned that the VR is also very helpful for patient-nurse interactions. Students are immediately

comfortable with a virtual patient, whereas at the beginning with actual patients who are strangers, students tend to be hesitant to walk in, talk to them and do all sorts of things to them without knowing them.

"The students love the VR," she added. "It's novel, it's new. Now, if it's actually helping them learn, only time will tell, but they do know that we've been trying to give them technology and teach with more technology. The program is pretty robust, and the feedback from the students has been positive."

In the future, Goldstein hopes to use the VR as a backup for clinical experiences, especially for students who may be sick or injured, which prevents them from attending their clinicals. This would help them stay on track and continue their progress.

"It's growing, and we still have a little bit of work to do," she concluded. "Overall, it's been great, and we wouldn't be where we are today without Josh."

# Faculty Research to Assess Widespread Impact of Cognitive Change in Cancer Survivors

An unfortunate downside of completing cancer treatment is that there are often persistent symptoms that can reduce a person’s quality of life. Unfortunately, both cancer and its treatment can be associated with cognitive dysfunction both during and after treatment is completed.

As a nurse, Assistant Professor Ashley Henneghan, PhD, RN, FAAN, has focused on alleviating unwanted symptoms and optimizing wellness for individuals with chronic diseases, primarily cancer. This research grew from her desire to improve the quality of life of those who have completed cancer treatment. Her lab, the Cognitive Health Initiative for Cancer Survivors, seeks to assess, identify and improve cognitive outcomes for cancer survivors.

Henneghan received a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to fund a study to assess the widespread impact of cognitive changes on cancer survivors’ everyday lives, where it matters most, and to determine the best cognitive measure to use to reflect this impact. Her team includes co-investigators from UT Dallas, UCLA and UC San Diego.

Participants in this study are breast cancer survivors who have completed their cancer treatment. Because it is challenging to capture the true nature of people’s daily cognitive functioning in real time, as opposed to snapshot assessments obtained in research settings, this study includes participants’ assessment of their cognitive functioning “in the wild” using smartphone technology.

“Clinically, cognitive function can be assessed using testing or using people’s own self-report of how they are functioning,” Henneghan said. “Oftentimes, these two types of measures do not correlate, which can invalidate a person’s experience if they sense that their cognitive functioning has declined, but they perform ‘normally’ on the cognitive test. I really value people’s experiences and self-report of their own functioning, but our team has identified some barriers to using these measures



Dr. Ashley Henneghan

**As a nurse, Assistant Professor Ashley Henneghan, PhD, RN, FAAN, has focused on alleviating unwanted symptoms and optimizing wellness for individuals with chronic diseases, including cancer.**

in our studies — it is unclear which tool is the best to use.”

Most of what is known about cognitive functioning after cancer treatment has come from studies with breast cancer survivors. Henneghan is now expanding her team’s research to assess the cognitive impact of cancer treatment in other cancer types with pilot funding from the American Cancer Society Institutional Grant — Dell Medical School.

Henneghan pointed out that the lifetime risk of developing cancer is one in two for men and one in three for women, and cognitive dysfunction is a prevalent complication of cancer treatment. This is important, she added because “our cognitive abilities

are central to who we are and impact every aspect of our daily life.”

Yet cognitive testing may not accurately assess the changes that cancer patients experience or may not be accessible to everyone who needs it. Self-report measures are readily accessible and more accurately reflect the impact of dysfunction on everyday life, but there are no best practices for using these measures. Henneghan believes their research will help move this science forward: “Our goal for this study,” she adds, “is to provide important data for establishing best practices for using self-report measures and digital technologies to assess cognitive function of cancer survivors in both research and clinical settings.”



**Bo Xie Funded by NIH for Research on Dementia Caregivers and Artificial Intelligence**

Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (ADRD) are a major public health concern. Individuals with ADRD require extensive daily care, often provided by family members: In the U.S. in 2018, caregivers provided approximately 18.5 billion hours of informal unpaid care for those with ADRD, valued at \$233.9 billion. This caregiving is stressful, and it can severely affect caregivers’ health and well-being. Yet according to School of Nursing Professor Bo Xie, PhD, FGSA, caregivers report that they have been unable to obtain sufficient information about challenges or care options through conventional sources, including clinicians. New technology such as artificial intelligence holds great potential for meeting caregivers’ unmet needs for information and services.

Xie is conducting this interdisciplinary research with Daqing He, PhD, professor in the Department of Informatics and Networked Systems at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Computing and Information. Co-investigators on the project include Robin Hilsabeck, PhD, ABPP, director of the Comprehensive Memory Center in the Mulva Clinic for the Neurosciences at UT Austin Dell Medical School, and Alyssa Aguirre, LCSW-S, assistant director of

Dementia Care Transformation for the Department of Neurology at Dell Medical School and assistant professor of practice at UT Austin Steve Hicks School of Social Work. Xie has received a \$561,417 grant from the National Institute on Aging in the National Institutes of Health for a high-priority R56 research project titled “Tailoring Responses to ADRD Caregivers’ Information Wants Through Human-Machine Collaboration (TRACO).”

“Our project is a great example of utilizing interdisciplinary expertise to solve real world problems of great significance,” Xie said. “Our long-term goal is to help diverse caregivers obtain information tailored to their needs and situations to enhance the quality of care and reduce caregivers’ stress. Toward this goal, we plan to develop the TRACO system through collaborations among experts in ADRD clinical care, artificial intelligence and informatics.”

The development of the TRACO system will serve as proof of concept for the team’s next study, where they will systematically examine the efficacy of a TRACO-based intervention among caregivers. TRACO will include two components: a backend that handles computation and storage — a tailoring engine — and a frontend installed on caregivers’ mobile devices — a mobile application interface.



# A year in photos



# School Establishes the Luci Baines Johnson and Ian J. Turpin Center for Gerontological Nursing



Ian Turpin, Luci Baines Johnson and Dr. Kavita Radhakrishnan

**T**he School of Nursing’s efforts to educate outstanding nurses and improve care for older adults will continue to grow, thanks to a gift from long-time UT supporters Luci Baines Johnson and Ian Turpin, to create the Luci Baines Johnson and Ian J. Turpin Center for Gerontological Nursing.

“It is our hope that the Luci Baines Johnson and Ian J. Turpin Center for Gerontological Nursing will provide more nurses the special skills that they need to better serve a rapidly increasing number of seniors and their loved ones,” said Luci Baines Johnson.

The Center will serve as an anchor for students and faculty interested in gerontological nursing research and practice. In addition, it will serve the critical purpose of nurturing ideas for research and education with the potential to reduce health disparities affecting older adults in Texas and beyond.

**“I am looking forward for the Center to support and advance innovative and meaningful research and practice in gerontological nursing through mentorship of students interested in the field of gerontological nursing, as well as collaborations with our nursing faculty and interdisciplinary colleagues who are experts in the various facets of addressing health disparities among older adults and promoting quality of life of diverse older adults,” Radhakrishnan said.**

“There is no greater satisfaction to us than to have a purpose-driven life,” Johnson said. “We have seen the problem seniors face in preserving wellness and addressing illness. We know we may become part of the problem our children’s generation will face in addressing the health care needs for their elderly loved ones.

“We want to be part of the solution,” she continued. “To have helped enhance the quality of life for those who have given us so much and to lighten the burden of our children is as satisfying a purpose as we could know.”

The new center’s goals include leading innovative community-based and clinical research that will



Dr. Kavita Radhakrishnan



Dr. Katherine Britt



Dr. Stephanie Morgan

benefit the health, independence and well-being of diverse aging adults and their caregivers; mentoring a new generation of nursing scholars and clinicians in gerontology; disseminating knowledge and strategies to promote well-being for older adults and their families; and advancing leadership that supports innovative, collaborative practice across care environments. Associate Professor Kavita Radhakrishnan, PhD, MSEE, RN, FAAN, will be the new center’s inaugural director. Working alongside her will be Katherine Britt, PhD, MSN, RN, as assistant director.

As director, Radhakrishnan will provide a vision and strategies to fulfil the Center’s mission — to advocate for adults to age in grace.

“I am looking forward for the Center to support and advance innovative and meaningful research and practice in gerontological nursing through mentorship of students interested in the field of gerontological nursing, as well as collaborations with our nursing faculty and interdisciplinary colleagues who are experts in the various facets of addressing health disparities among older adults and promoting quality of life of diverse older adults,” Radhakrishnan said.

The Center will provide innovative opportunities to generate, disseminate and translate new knowledge. Radhakrishnan and Britt plan to host a monthly gathering for students and faculty scholars, with learning opportunities for research and practice, as well as collaboration and networking opportunities across disciplines and resources. Essential career development activities in leadership, peer review, grant writing, translation skills and dissemination will enable students to grow and thrive.

Clinical Professor and Director of Practice Innovation Stephanie Morgan, PhD, RN, FNP-BC, will serve as the PI on a study for the Health and Human Services Commission regarding assisted living facilities (ALF). The outcome of the study will inform ALF legislation. Through this, she hopes there will be an ongoing partnership with HHSC for future studies and learning opportunities.

Morgan said she is looking forward to the Center’s impact on research, education and practice in gerontological nursing. She believes the Center will incorporate interdisciplinary work in all three of these

areas in partnerships with other colleges and schools across campus to focus on gerontologic health care and well-being.

The Center’s leadership team aims to leverage UT centers and resources to grow into a gerontological hub that can guide solutions to society’s aging-related challenges. The Center is uniquely positioned to collaborate with other UT gerontological centers and networks, such as the Texas Aging & Longevity Consortium, the Center on Aging and Population Sciences, the Conference Series on Aging in the Americas, the Gerontology Resources and the Aging Community in Education program, the Mulva Clinic for the Neurosciences and the Population Research Center, to help

translate evidence into practice and adapt solutions for healthy and positive aging in Texas and beyond to improve the lives of older adults and caregivers.

Johnson and Turpin, who live in Austin, discovered that although this vibrant community is often thought of in terms of its youth, its greatest growth is occurring in its senior population.

“We have long thought that our generation was going to sink the health care delivery system for our children’s generation,” she said. “We feel we need to do our part to address this critical concern in our lifetimes.”

While their mothers were financially secure with children who were well connected with the health care delivery system, Johnson and Turpin determined that the senior population was underserved, with a need for knowledgeable providers in geriatrics/gerontology.

“As we have aged, we have become increasingly aware that there is more of our lives in the rear-view mirrors than that which lies ahead,” Johnson added.

“These factors and our life-long love of the School of Nursing motivated us to make our gift to gerontological nursing now rather than later,” she concluded. “Never did we ever dream that there would be a center named after us. We are thrilled, deeply honored and more committed than ever to see the School of Nursing rise up to meet these crucial concerns.”

**“We want to be part of the solution,” she continued. “To have helped enhance the quality of life for those who have given us so much and to lighten the burden of our children is as satisfying a purpose as we could know.” Johnson said.**

# Music Can Heal Wounds Medicine Cannot Touch: Research on Music for Patients and Caregivers

Cognitive impairment can occur in as many as 40 percent to 70 percent of individuals with multiple sclerosis (MS), a potentially disabling disease of the brain, spinal cord and optic nerves — the central nervous system (CNS). Although the exact cause of MS is unknown, we do know that something triggers the immune system to attack the CNS. This results in damage to myelin, the protective layer that insulates nerve fibers, and it disrupts signals to and from the brain. The interruption of these communication

signals causes unpredictable symptoms, including numbness, tingling, memory problems, pain, fatigue, blindness and/or paralysis. Individuals' experiences of MS differ, and these conditions or symptoms may be temporary or long-lasting. Few studies have considered the learning of music in people with MS, in particular the possibility of using the learning of music to improve cognition. Assistant Professor, Carolyn Phillips, PhD, RN, ACNP, AOCNP, is conducting research on music learning versus music listening to improve

cognition in people with MS. For the music learning component, she has created an online intervention to help teach individuals how to play the ukulele. As both a nurse and a performing musician, Phillips is uniquely situated to design and implement innovative interventions that combine the use of narrative writing, storytelling and music to improve psychosocial well-being in patients and caregivers. In a collaboration between the School of Nursing and Dell Medical School, Phillips is working with Shelli Kesler, PhD, Dr. Mary Louise Adams Endowed Professor in Oncology Nursing and director of the brain health neuroscience lab, to use functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS) to explore the potential effect of music learning on cognition. fNIRS is a noninvasive imaging technique that employs near-infrared light to determine the relative concentration of hemoglobin in the brain, given differences in hemoglobin's light absorption patterns. Patients wear a headband that shows prefrontal lobe activity and the team will evaluate whether certain patterns of brain activity can predict who will show improved cognition following this type of intervention.

"What we're hoping to understand, Phillips said, is whether "learning to play music can help improve cognition. Looking at different things, like memory, processing speed, and decision making, we are interested in learning if music can improve cognition. We're also wanting to know if implementing this kind of intervention is feasible for people with MS, as they can struggle with hand movement, strength and neuropathy."

At some point, cognitive impairment affects the majority of those diagnosed



As nurses write their stories, they discover that they are still carrying emotions from past experiences.

with MS, so novel interventions that help engage their brains in different ways are important: "Music reaches all parts of your brain, and hopefully, that can be used as evidence as to why this type of intervention is beneficial," Phillips said.

Music can also have an impact on emotional well-being. Playing an instrument and listening to music bring joy. According to Phillips, it's hard to feel sad when playing the ukulele — it's a happy instrument.

Phillips' participants receive a series of songs they can play for their family, such as "Happy Birthday" and others that enable them to take what they learn and engage with their loved ones.

"When people connect with music, they open up in a different way," Phillips said. "When playing music, the conversation is not focused so much on talking about emotions, but rather it just happens organically. People start telling their stories as they connect to the music. If we find this intervention effective, I think it would be lovely if self-help groups could add this kind of element."

Phillips is also working on a project that started when she was a postdoctoral research fellow at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard Medical School. In this research, she is examining the impact of oncology nurses' and family caregivers' storytelling through music.

In both groups, Phillips is looking at the use of storytelling through music to help individuals process grief and loss. Oncology nurses, for example, can care for people for many years during which they develop relationships with them, and they

**"Music reaches all parts of your brain, and hopefully, that can be used as evidence as to why this type of intervention is beneficial," Phillips said.**

experience high levels of grief and loss in their work.

Nurses, Phillips said, aren't taught how to cope with work-related emotions. In her four-week online writing workshop, participants write their stories. Often these stories are about the people nurses have cared for and how they impacted the nurse's life. As the nurses write the stories, they discover that they are still carrying emotions from those experiences.

After the writing workshop, Phillips pairs each individual with a songwriter, who then turns the story into a personalized song. A final performance of the stories and songs together informs a collective space to honor the nurses' work, in which the nurses recognize a shared experience that unites them.

In her preliminary studies, Phillips' intervention mitigated oncology nurses' loneliness and improved their self-compassion and sleep. She also found a trend toward reduced burnout and compassion fatigue.

Funded by St. David's Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research in Underserved Populations, in a second study to implement storytelling through music with family caregivers, Phillips is working with bereaved cancer parents who have lost a child to cancer between the ages of zero and 39 years.

In this research, individuals tell their stories in a group setting with other bereaved parents. The study is co-led by a bereavement counselor, as well as music therapists who contribute to the songwriting component.

"We're looking at helping them tell the stories of their children and creating a legacy piece for them," Phillips said. "The story and song created can facilitate continued bonds and a connecting piece with their child, while also helping parents share their stories in a safe space and find meaning in life after such a profound loss."

Mental health is the primary outcome of concern in these studies, as music creates a socially acceptable space to share emotions.

In her study with the oncology nurses, Phillips found that the nurses' families often didn't know what they were going through, and the nurses didn't have the words to be able to communicate what they were experiencing.

The stories and songs gave them something tangible to share. Several oncology nurses shared their stories and songs with their spouses and families, who finally understood what the nurses were dealing with in their work and the impact it had on them.

Indeed, the music and the personalized song were like a carrot dangling in front of the individuals to get them to participate in the study: "Participants expressed that they wouldn't have been drawn to only a writing intervention," Phillips said, "but having a personalized song at the end was very appealing. By the end of the intervention, most participants learn that writing was a place for them to process their emotions, but it was the song that brought them to that place." A special perspective that Phillips has learned from the nurses was that "the songs turned sad stories into something beautiful."

Dr. Carolyn Phillips performs with duo Hardened and Tempered at El Mercado in Austin, Texas.

# Recent Graduates Present Research Internationally

School of Nursing 2023 honors program graduates Brianna Garza and Tobechukwu (Tobi) Phillips presented their research at international conferences over the summer.

Garza's abstract for her study "Self-Concept Levels Among Pre-Licensure Nursing Students" was featured at the International Council of Nurses (ICN) 2023 Congress in Montreal. Phillips presented a paper on "The Influence of Mass Media's Misrepresentation of African American Health Disparities During COVID-19 on Nursing Students" at the Sigma Theta Tau 34th International Nursing Research Congress in Abu Dhabi.

Both graduates' projects grew from their participation in the nursing honors program at UT.

For Garza, the presentation of her abstract represents the perfect end to her undergraduate education at UT, owing especially to the guidance of her mentors at the School of Nursing and to her four years of hard work. As an honors student, she designed and conducted her research with the assistance of Julie Zuñiga, PhD, RN, FAAN, associate professor, Ana Todd, PhD, RN, assistant dean of Undergraduate Programs and PhD student and graduate research and teaching assistant So Hyeon Bang. When Garza presented her preliminary findings at The Longhorn Research Poster Session in 2022, Li-Chen Lin, PhD, RN, CNRN, clinical assistant professor, encouraged her to submit an abstract on self-concept for presentation at the ICN Congress.

In her cross-sectional correlational study, Garza defined self-concept as a person's self-judgements and attitudes, influenced by social comparisons. Using the Professional Self-Concept of Nurses Instrument, she investigated associations between multiple factors and UT BSN students' levels of self-concept.

Her results were both promising and surprising. Higher levels of exposure to "real-world" nursing were negatively correlated with professional self-concept, but participation in UT's Peer Academic Coaching Program and student



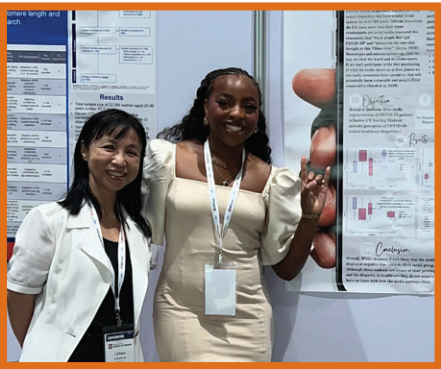
Brianna Garza presents her research at the International Council of Nurses 2023 Congress in Montreal.

organizations was positively correlated with self-concept. UT BSN students had a relatively high average level of self-concept: 78 on a scale of 27 to 108.

Garza thinks that her findings may generalize to larger populations of nursing students and professionals. Improved self-concept might mitigate major issues in nursing today, including burnout and staffing shortages. At the ICN Congress, she hoped to promote the discussion of professional nurse self-concept as a potential solution to the worldwide nursing shortage. It is vitally important to continue identifying factors that impact the self-concept of nurses.

Garza is now in her RN Residency program in the Neuroscience ICU at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

Tobi Phillips, also an honors student, was a Forty Acres Scholar. During the



Tobechukwu (Tobi) Phillips presents her research at the Sigma Theta Tau 34th International Nursing Research Congress in Abu Dhabi.

School of Nursing's St. David's Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research in Underserved Populations (CHPR) 21st Annual Conference, held in March 2023, Phillips won the award for best poster in the undergraduate research division.

Phillips was mentored by Assistant Professor Michelle Wright, PhD, RN, who recognized her passion to mitigate health disparities and realize health equity and encouraged her to conduct original research. Her study is an examination of social media's effect on our perception of African Americans and their experiences of COVID-19.

Phillips found the portrayal of marginalized communities in the media has

Both graduates' projects grew from their participation in the nursing honors program at UT.

negatively impacted their experience with COVID-19. Her studies showed 62 percent of white nursing students indicated they strongly disagree or disagree with the idea that their race/ethnicity will not receive worse COVID-19 care than other groups. However, she found that these students also didn't think the media displayed negative bias towards them. Phillips shared, that although these students are aware of their privilege and the disparity in health care, they do not seem to have an issue with how the media portrays them.

Phillips is now working as a pediatric emergency department nurse at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston. She hopes individuals will gain a sense of self-awareness and empathy for marginalized communities through her presentation, but she also wants to show other nursing honors students that once-in-a-lifetime opportunities can stem from conducting research.

"Do not minimize the opportunities and doors that research can open," she said.

# Always Be Prepared: UTMRC's Volunteers and Public Health Disasters

A collaboration of faculty, staff, students and community leaders makes up the UT Medical Reserve Corps (UTMRC), which aims to increase health and preparedness of UT Austin communities by training and maintaining a group of ready volunteers to respond to public health disasters and crises. The unit bolsters existing emergency response teams and public health advocates on campus.

The MRC program was established after the events on Sept. 11, 2001, by Presidential decree, and it is currently managed by the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response, an agency of the U.S. Public Health Service within the Department of Health and Human Services. The MRC focuses on preventing, preparing for and responding to the adverse health effects of public health emergencies and disasters. Nationwide, there are approximately 800 MRC units with over 200,000 volunteers.

The School of Nursing applied to have a recognized MRC unit in 2011, after its work with the Austin community in providing nursing care at the convention center in 2005 for Hurricane Katrina and Rita refugees.

Sponsored by the School of Nursing and part of its Disaster Mobilization Plan, the UTMRC organizes the medical response efforts of the School of Nursing, Steve Hicks School of Social Work, Dell Medical School and College of Pharmacy in the event of major disasters that warrant the City of Austin to seek help from the community. UTMRC currently has approximately 300 active members.

To meet the challenge of providing thousands of vaccinations during the COVID-19 pandemic, UTMRC helped UT Health, Austin Public Health and Ascension Texas recruit, vet, train and organize over 600 medical and lay volunteers to assist the vaccination of over 100,000 individuals. Part of UTMRC's role was to ensure that clinics had sufficient clinical staff to administer the vaccine and enough



School of Nursing faculty Dr. Lisa Morris, Dr. Ana Todd and Dr. Shalonda Horton and BSN student Melanie Ly.

individuals to perform a variety of tasks, such as checking in patients and manning observation rooms.

UTMRC has been granted over \$100,000 by the National Association of County and City Health Officials with three annual Organizational Readiness Awards and a COVID-19 Readiness, Innovate, Sustain and Equip (RISE) Award to help grow the unit.

Since the pandemic, UTMRC has been conducting numerous trainings, including Stop the Bleed, Psychological First Aid, Personal Emergency To-Go Bag Training and Active Shooter Awareness. The UTMRC team also participated in the School of Nursing's inaugural Longhorn Nursing Summer Camp, which introduced high school students to the health care profession by increasing their knowledge and understanding in the field of nursing.

"The pandemic solidified the idea that preparedness is important," Incident Commander/Unit Coordinator and School of Nursing Representative Li-Chen Lin, PhD, RN, CNRN, clinical assistant professor said. "We've been doing a lot of trainings and disaster drills, and I think the School of

Nursing is better off than others who have not done those trainings. It solidified that training is important, and we will continue to emphasize training."

Training for Stop the Bleed is a component of the RISE grant. The target audience comprises MRC volunteers and the Austin and University communities. Several trainings have taken place this year; they include a virtual interactive course and hands-on skills training. Lin said that her goal is for everyone interested in this training to have a personal Stop the Bleed kit.

"We need more people now that the pandemic is 'over' to not forget about UTMRC and to not forget about disaster preparedness and emergency response because we tend to forget about it when nothing in crisis is happening and everything is good," Lin said. "My passion is to help people who are interested in this kind of training to be prepared. You don't have to join UTMRC to be disaster prepared — we can all be prepared. UTMRC helps faculty, staff and students be more aware of emergency response and disaster preparedness. It's a good thing to do in an organized way to help the community."

# Undergraduate Students Successfully Pass Resolution for Harm Reduction Education at NSNA Convention

School of Nursing students and officers of the UT Austin Nursing Students' Association Huy Le, Alexis Maceda, Chardelene Reyes and Kaliah Sherrod, along with faculty advisor Jennifer Flippo, DNP, APRN, CPNP-PC, PMHS, clinical assistant professor, attended the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) Annual Convention in April 2023 in Nashville, Tennessee. The UTNSA is a chapter of the NSNSA, but this was the first time the UTNSA represented the School of Nursing in three years, due to COVID-19.

The NSNA's Annual Convention brings together student nurses from across the country to learn about current issues in nursing education and the nursing profession, network with other passionate individuals who are engaged in innovative research and initiatives and vote on evidence-informed resolutions written by students to address gaps within nursing. This year's theme was "Reflection: A Catalyst for Change."

All members of the UTNSA had the opportunity to work on a resolution to be voted on at the convention. In January, the UT group submitted a resolution calling for education on harm reduction to be integrated into nursing curricula, along with a sample implementation plan, a budget sheet and research sources. School of Nursing student and UTNSA member Olivia Schneider was also a co-author of the resolution but could not attend.

"It was incredibly impactful and undoubtedly one of the best experiences we could have been part of as nursing students," Le said. "In a room filled with nursing students and other nursing professionals, we felt nervous and excited that the issue ... was considered important to discuss."

The group prepared for a two-minute "elevator pitch" for their resolution, which addressed three important issues: the national overdose crisis; substance use



Huy Le, Alexis Maceda, Chardelene Reyes and Kaliah Sherrod attend the National Student Nurses' Association Annual Convocation in Nashville, Tennessee.

heavily stigmatized and criminalized; and research showing that nursing students are unprepared to have conversations with patients about substance abuse, given a lack of educational emphasis on harm reduction.

The UT group called for principles of harm reduction to be included in nursing curricula and for the NSNA to provide nursing students across the country with knowledge about harm reduction and resources related to advocacy, as well as examples of harm reduction practice.

"We wanted to focus the conversation on safety, empathy, empowerment and 'meeting people where they are at without leaving them there,'" Le said. When the NSNA passed the resolution unanimously, it was "a moment of relief and hope because now health equity for individuals who use substances can be advanced" by nursing students "equipped with knowledge, skills and empathy" through a harm reduction framework.

The students also discussed issues regarding mental health, diabetes, first-aid, hospital-related complications, support for unhoused individuals, causes of health disparities and nursing leadership, and they spoke against misinformation and low-quality research evidence.

At the convention, the students

connected with other nursing students and professionals who inspired and introduced them to new perspectives and research.

"We felt reaffirmed," Le said, by "the immense capacity of nurses to create change within hospitals and out in the community ... to tackle complex societal issues." He said that the students were able to apply "research, writing, public speaking, collaboration and advocacy," with a potential impact on nursing education and the nursing profession.

Nurses and nursing students have a great capacity to promote change and exert influence when they work together and with other professionals. As Le said, nursing reaches beyond bedside practice, and for him, participating in the conference showed how this was so. He met with nursing students working on policy and rewriting laws, raising awareness through education, collaborating with business leaders to deliver innovative health care products, leveraging technology to scale, addressing inequities and running for office.

Le found it "truly inspirational" to see the nursing profession addressing societal change, and other nursing students passionate about it. For Chardelene Reyes, the experience of meeting people from across the nation contrasted with the School of Nursing's intimacy.

The conference participants presented "so many outlooks on nursing, and they were both inspiring and eye-opening," Reyes said. "I would talk to someone from Iowa about combating health disparities, then turn around and speak to someone from Pennsylvania about mental health awareness." Meeting "like-minded individuals who shared such a profound commitment toward patient advocacy was encouraging ... In the midst of the all too familiar stress, doubts and academics, opportunities like these are a kind reminder of the breadth of nursing as a profession and the bright future ahead."

## Relaunch of Study Abroad Programs

Students at the School of Nursing once again had the opportunity to venture off campus during the Summer 2023 relaunch of the study abroad program. After several years of hiatus due to COVID-19, a total of 16 students — 11 from nursing and six from other UT colleges and schools — were taught by professors Nancy Guillet, DNP, MD, MSN, RN, and Ana Todd, PhD, RN, in Costa Rica.

The School of Nursing is one of only a few in the U.S. that offer study abroad for nursing students. Engaging Global Health in Costa Rica provided students with an immersion experience to explore socio-cultural issues, health care systems, health determinants and health outcomes in Costa Rica while practicing Spanish language skills and receiving credit for required courses in the nursing program. While in Costa Rica, students took two courses: Global Health, and Spanish for Health Care Professionals.

This program is designed for students with an interest in global health and/or Latin America. Costa Rica provides its citizens with universal health care coverage and offers some of the highest quality health care in Latin America. Students participated in excursions to unique health and community-based organizations, as well as enjoyed Costa Rica's natural beauty, hospitality and culture.

The course focuses on current issues, to show the students what Costa Rican organizations are doing.

"The students get to see things differently and see what's going on in the world, which gives them a new perspective," Guillet said. "It really is a worldview because we are so focused on our own world and it's eye-opening to see people who have less resources in developing countries and how



UT students explore Costa Rica during the Engaging Global Health in Costa Rica study abroad program.

they live with so little."

Todd explained that the program's goal is to expand students' horizons and help them consider other options and what can they do as future health care professionals. The hope is that students will take what they have learned in Costa Rica and advocate for change.

"We hope they look at everything from a different lens, and they put on a different lens and shift their paradigm," Todd said. "Any education abroad experience is transformative," she admitted, but the students' evident growth, their increased open-mindedness and their new appreciation of what nurses can do and nurses' impact on the world are all key.

Guillet also said that what students take away depends on what they put into their experience.

"We want to facilitate a door that opens beyond the 40 acres, the city, state and country and open a window of opportunity to see how much they can do and be a part of changing the world," she said.

"It's not about the education, it's about the growth and transformation," Todd said; "They will one day be global citizens and see how we're all connected, and this is probably the most important way to be engaged in a culture that's different from theirs" and perhaps appreciate it.

In addition to the relaunch of the Costa Rica study abroad program, the President



Associate Professor Julie Zuñiga and nursing students Arielle Warren and Shawn Fan explore the Maasai Mara on a safari in Kenya.

Award for Global Learning took 13 UT Austin undergraduate students, including two nursing students, along with Associate Professor Julie Zuñiga, PhD, MSN, RN, to Kenya in July 2023 as part of the Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare (AMPATH) consortium.

The purpose of the trip was to connect with the School

of Nursing's AMPATH partners from Moi University and Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital to work on wound care prevention and treatment projects. This trip was key in the School's continued relationship with AMPATH and Moi University. The School is currently working on two new manuscripts with a team of students, junior faculty and senior faculty.

There were four student teams, each including a student from Moi University School of Nursing. Two teams had prototypes to prevent wounds with locally sourced devices to help with turning. One team created educational material in English and Swahili, and the final team conducted a qualitative study on the barriers and facilitators to wound care prevention and treatment in the hospital. Students presented their projects to key stakeholders for feedback and further development. They also learned about current training and treatment and observed wound care treatment done by nurses for patients with severe wounds.

"This trip was unique because it was interdisciplinary and brought professions together that don't normally work together, but the projects are made stronger by the expanded perspective," Zuñiga said. "Our nursing students were able to take leadership roles with their peers, as they had the most experience and knowledge about patient care."

# High School Students' Glimpse of Nursing in Inaugural Summer Camp

In June 2023, the School of Nursing hosted its inaugural Longhorn Nursing Immersion Summer Camp for high school students. This two-week, two-session camp introduced teens to the healthcare profession by increasing their knowledge and understanding of the field of nursing. DeAnna Baker, Learning Enhancement and Academic Progress Center (LEAP) special projects and training manager, and Leigh Goldstein, PhD, RN, ANP-BC, CEN, clinical associate professor and director of the LEAP Center, served as the camp's organizers.

Fifty-seven high school students participated in several nursing activities, including hands-on skills, virtual reality, simulations led by School of Nursing faculty, presentations and a field trip to the Dell Seton Medical Center. The activities were led by registered nurses and were designed to expose students to a wide variety of nursing specialties and opportunities. Current School of Nursing students served as camp counselors.

Nursing student and camp counselor Anne Del Barrio volunteered to meet high school students who were interested in nursing and/or wanted to attend the School of Nursing.

"I wanted to be able to teach them what I wish I knew before coming here," Del Barrio said. "The skills they are learning is a review for me, but some of it I haven't learned yet, so it's a good head start for me to see what's ahead this next year. While they are learning, I'm learning with them."

The camp provided high school students with basic knowledge about nursing and the requirements for becoming a registered nurse. They learned about patient assessment, electrocardiogram readings, patient bedside manners, intramuscular injections and oral medications, use of the Electronic Health Record (EHR) Tutor for training, IV insertion, maternity simulation, care for newborn patients and feeding tube insertion for pediatric patients. They also participated in a disaster drill.

In 2019, Goldstein envisioned a weeklong day camp for high school students who were interested in and wanted to know more about nursing. COVID-19



unfortunately delayed the realization of that vision, but after several years of planning, it came to fruition. The camp represented the combined work of not only Goldstein and Baker, but the entire LEAP Center. The Simulation and Skills Center staff, joined by Lisa Costa, Nursing Continuing Professional Development coordinator, contributed by setting up lab-based activities.



High school student and camp participant Jordyn Robertson has always been attracted to UT and viewed the camp as an opportunity to learn more about the School and to give nursing a try.

"This was an eye-opening experience for me, and it has provided really good exposure," Robertson said. "I've realized how much nurses actually do. The movies and TV shows don't give nurses the credit they deserve. My biggest takeaway is the work ethic and the amount of work it takes to be a successful nurse."

The campers received hands-on experience, and if nursing turns out to be their career choice or not, it should help to keep them on the path or at least pique their interest in nursing.

Baker and Goldstein said they hoped that the students were inspired by the registered and future registered nurses they interacted with, that they learned that nursing is a rewarding career, and that they might choose nursing as their future profession.

# The Nurse Faculty Shortage: Innovative Solutions

Across the U.S., faculty shortages at nursing schools are limiting student capacity while the need for professional registered nurses continues to grow.

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), in addition to the nursing faculty shortage, there is a shortage of clinical nurse preceptors, who also play an essential role in preparing nursing students for practice.

In a 2021-22 report, the AACN stated that U.S. nursing schools rejected 91,938 qualified applicants to nursing programs, owing to an insufficient number of nursing faculty and clinical preceptors among other factors. Most nursing schools in the survey pointed to faculty shortages as a top reason for not accepting qualified applicants into their programs.

In August 2023, School of Nursing professors Gayle Timmerman, PhD, RN, CNS, FNAP, FAAN, and Alexandra Garcia, PhD, RN, FAAN, completed a project supported by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER II) fund to improve the Nursing Faculty Pipeline.

Timmerman and Garcia explained that their project's goal was to reach nurses outside of traditional academic pathways and create a pipeline for recruiting and retaining nursing faculty and nurse preceptors skilled in teaching clinical nursing. Retention is critical component to addressing the nurse faculty shortage.

The project addressed the shortage by developing a clinical teaching toolkit with multiple resources for faculty and preceptors, which included a series of videos vignettes addressing common challenges in clinical teaching, as well as simulations, role plays and activities for developing clinical teaching competencies. The toolkit's short videos are linked to YouTube and the School of Nursing website ([nursing.utexas.edu/clinical-teaching-resources](https://nursing.utexas.edu/clinical-teaching-resources)).

A second set of videos in the toolkit promote careers in nursing education and



Clinical Assistant Professor Elesha Roberts and Clinical Nurse Specialist Jana Brit.

describe pathways for those interested in opportunities to teach. They showcase dynamic nurse educators in a variety of roles as clinical nurse educators — as preceptors and as teachers of nursing in academic and institutional settings. An additional informational video focuses on various pathways: continuing education, graduate education, certificates for teaching nursing and national certifications applicable to different teaching roles.

The toolkit provides helpful resources for those who precept and teach clinically; resources include topics such as the Texas Board of Nursing guidelines for preceptors and frequently asked questions, information on teaching-learning methods, maintaining work-life balance and strategies to advocate for preceptors' support at the organizational level.

The project piloted a two-day clinical teaching bootcamp in August with intensive training, interactive activities and simulations related to clinical teaching. The bootcamp offered continuing education credits and was provided to nurses at partner organizations, to faculty who were new to clinical teaching and to graduate nursing students from area schools of nursing who are interested in precepting or teaching.

These initiatives are intended to reach nurses that the School of Nursing's current programs may not reach, such as

undergraduate and graduate nursing students elsewhere and nurses working in hospitals and other clinical settings who have not yet considered complementing their nursing careers with a role in teaching clinical nursing.

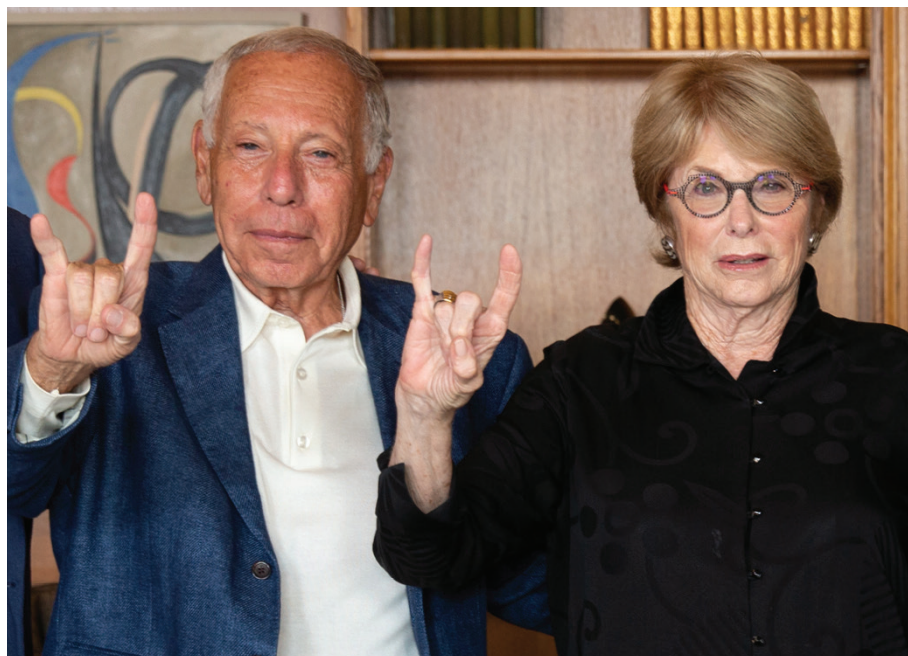
Together, the initiatives can increase awareness of opportunities to teach clinical nursing and knowledge about the pathways and the skills needed to do so, along with supportive resources.

The initiatives are also geared toward those who are engaged in hands-on teaching of clinical practice — not just those who are interested in becoming preceptors, but preceptors themselves, clinical faculty and clinical nurse educators.

Increasing the number of preceptors and those interested in clinical teaching by providing training and support should also increase the number of nurses entering the faculty pipeline. Support and training for nurse preceptors will help train more nursing students and help nurses transition within their careers.

"Usually, you tend to enjoy what you are good at. If we can help preceptors and instructors develop clinical teaching skills and feel more confident about their clinical teaching, the hope is that they may enjoy teaching more and become more interested in a career pathway that includes teaching," Timmerman concluded.

## Mickey and Jeanne Klein Support Nursing Students Through the Forty Acres Scholarship Program



Mickey and Jeanne Klein

**“We want to make sure that we can continue to give to nursing students,” Jeanne said. “We don’t want nurses to come out of the University with a lot of debt — with any debt — because, unfortunately, we don’t pay nurses what they should be paid, so we want to help as many as we can to graduate without debt.”**

**“N**urses are what makes our nation run, which makes us healthy, and we really couldn’t live without nurses,” said Mickey Klein.

Mickey and his wife Jeanne Klein support the School of Nursing because they believe it is one of the two most important professions — education being the other.

That belief is based in part on his own experiences with the nurses who cared for him when he recently underwent surgery in Austin.

Among their many contributions to UT Austin, the Kleins have established the Jeanne L. and Michael L. Klein Forty Acres Scholarship for students in the School of Nursing. This is the first Forty Acres

Scholarship dedicated specifically to support a nursing student.

The Kleins think that the Forty Acres Scholarships are among “the best scholarships we’ve ever seen,” Jeanne said. “We love the Forty Acres Scholars Program, and we love that when we give, the students don’t have to worry for the next four years about how they’re paying for school. The ones we’ve given to are really grateful for the Forty Acres Scholarship. It’s very rewarding.”

The Forty Acres Scholars Program, administered by the Texas Exes alumni association, inspires and nurtures students and helps them develop their talents to benefit society. As members of a cohort of fellow

student scholars, they receive a rich college experience that provides academic, leadership and cultural opportunities. Funding provides tuition, a living stipend, a book stipend and enrichment activities including a community component and global and professional experiences.

For Mickey and Jeanne Klein, it’s a great pleasure to follow the careers of these nursing students from the time they enter as undergraduates and then graduate and choose to either continue their education or enter the field.

“It’s one of the great delights we have in life that we’re able to do this and support them and even follow them after,” Mickey said.

In addition to supporting nursing students, Mickey and Jeanne Klein have endowed scholarships to support students in the College of Education. The Kleins have supported students through scholarships for several years, and they hope to continue to support as many students as they can.

“We want to make sure that we can continue to give to nursing students,” Jeanne said. “We don’t want nurses to come out of the University with a lot of debt — with any debt — because, unfortunately, we don’t pay nurses what they should be paid, so we want to help as many as we can to graduate without debt.”

Mickey emphasized that he wants to help nurses gain the recognition they deserve: “Another reason that we’re so supportive of nurses — and teachers — is because they are so essential, so vital, so underpaid, so underappreciated, and we want to do everything we can do to help them financially.”

The School of Nursing is appreciative for friends such as the Kleins who understand the importance of guaranteeing that students receive the support and education they need to improve health care.

“We are grateful to the Kleins for their belief in Texas Nursing and their financial generosity through the Forty Acres Scholarship Program,” Dean Eun-Ok Im said.

## Social Resource Center Provides Additional Support for Families in Del Valle

**F**or many years, the School of Nursing has served both the Del Valle region of Travis County through the School’s Children’s Wellness Center (CWC) and the City of Austin through the School’s Family Wellness Center. Recently, the School launched a new initiative at the CWC to better serve the community. The new Social Resource Center (SRC) at the CWC helps meet basic essential needs for community members who need additional support.

Funded by St. David’s Foundation, the SRC was established in the fall of 2019 by CWC staff. The SRC offers a food pantry, a clothing closet and an office center with internet and fax access. In addition, the center has an ongoing partnership with Austin Public Health to provide a preventive class for Type 2 diabetes. The center helps families in surrounding communities find resources and offers a glimpse of hope in overwhelming situations.

“The SRC’s goal is to not only be a place that provides temporary basic resources but supports and builds life-changing education with learning centers,” said Martha Lujan, community health worker at the SRC.

According to Lujan, the SRC envisions offering classes in English as a Second Language, computer-literacy classes and entrepreneurship workshops given by community members. The entrepreneurship workshops will include helping individuals set up their own businesses by developing a business plan, registering with the county tax office, and registering with the IRS. The SRC hopes to build new opportunities for other UT Austin departments to join in expanding the new programs.

“The SRC plays an important role in the community because we are bringing in resources the community needs,” Lujan said. To offer the best support to the community, the SRC believes in trauma-informed care while providing social services directly to the public, with bilingual advocates. The SRC strives to reduce as many barriers as possible for clients



Juan with El Buen Samaritano Food Access manager, SRC partner Mina Davis-Founder of Valley of Hope and SRC staff Martha Lujan and Jesus Ybarra.

to be able to have access to services. This includes no zip code restrictions.

From June 2022 to July 2023, the SRC served a total of 552 households with a total of 820 family members.

“Being part of the SRC development and having the opportunity of building genuine relationships with the community has brought out something in me as a human being that I can’t explain,” Lujan said. “Being able to walk alongside our clients is a privilege.”

Throughout the year, the SRC participates in various events, often as the coordination headquarters for co-created events to support the community. Examples include HopeFest and the Housing Authority of the City of Austin’s Health & Wellness Fair.

For Halloween in 2022, the SRC received a donation of 100 pumpkins and designed a pumpkin patch for the children. In November, the SRC’s pop-up mobile food pantry at Dessau Middle School served 70 families, and the center provided 300 hot meals, thanks to Operation Turkey, to feed and clothe the unhoused and unsheltered on Thanksgiving Day. SRC partner Mina Davis, from Valley of Hope, helped make the food pantry possible. Costco donated pantry goods, and El Buen Samaritano provided 50 Turkeys and 63 H-E-B \$70 gift cards for families.

In December, the SRC partnered with New Covenant Church to provide nearly 300 gifts to children in the Del Valle region. Costco generously donated dry goods for the holidays, as well as coats for children.

In January 2023, the SRC began a new partnership with Austin Diaper Bank to provide diapers, wipes and feminine products for families in need.

In addition to the Food Pantry held three days a week, the SRC has also held Mobile Food Pantry events twice a month with their partner El Buen Samaritano, which will continue the rest of the year. Once a month, they also hold a free phone event with the Affordable Connectivity Program with Cricket Wireless.

In order to help families during the back-to-school season, in August 2023, the SRC hosted a resource event for the Travis County Juvenile Probation Office for their clients and families to provide free haircuts, a food pantry, clothing and backpacks.

It takes partnerships to expand social services, and the SRC is becoming a hub of access where other organizations that do not have a store front location in the Del Valle region can still serve those in the area without physically being there. These partnerships enable the SRC to provide more goods and services for the community.



## Whitney Thurman Joins Betty Irene Moore Fellowship Program

**W**hitney Thurman, PhD, RN, assistant professor in the School of Nursing, is one of 16 nurse scientists named to the fourth cohort of those awarded the Betty Irene Moore Fellowship for Nurse Leaders and Innovators. This fellowship is funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation in partnership with the UC Davis Graduate School of Management and the UC Davis Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing.

“I am very honored to have been selected for this fellowship program,” Thurman said. “It is an incredible opportunity for me to gain research and leadership skills that will launch me to effectively lead diverse coalitions and realize my vision of creating systems that support disabled older adults with lived experience of homelessness to age in place in healthy, resilient communities and to attain optimal health and well-being.”

Fellows receive \$450,000 to conduct a three-year innovative project or study with the potential to address a gap in knowledge, meet a vital need, alter care delivery, or design a new solution to advance health. Thurman’s project focuses on developing and

implementing community-centered care to meet the complex needs of formerly homeless adults.

In addition to the project, the fellowship features a hybrid online and classroom curriculum designed and taught in partnership with the UC Davis Graduate School of Management and national experts to enhance leadership and innovation capacity, strengthen strategic thinking and collaborative skills, expand professional networks, develop entrepreneurial skills and propel innovative ideas to fruition. A mentor selected by the fellow and an additional mentor provided by the national program office round out the fellow’s educational experience.

The program is made possible by Betty Irene Moore’s passion to advance nursing with the goal of better outcomes for individuals, families and communities. The foundation seeks to prepare nurses as collaborative leaders with the skills and confidence to inspire others, enact change and challenge the status quo. With the Betty Irene Moore Fellowship for Nurse Leaders and Innovators, the foundation supports nurse leaders who take ideas to scale that advance high-quality, high-value care and optimal health outcomes.

### Faculty

**Shelli Kesler**, PhD, was recently named one of the Best Neuroscience Scientists in the U.S. for 2023. She was promoted to full professor at the School of Nursing, and was also appointed to the Dr. Mary Louise Adams Endowed Professorship in Oncology Nursing.

**Miyong Kim**, PhD, RN, FAAN, professor, was appointed to the Maureen Healy Decherd ’73 Distinguished Professorship in Nursing.

**John Lowe**, PhD, RN, FAAN, professor, was appointed to the Joseph H. Blades Centennial Memorial Professorship in Nursing.

**Stephanie Morgan**, PhD ’13, RN, FNP-BC, clinical professor and director of Practice Innovation, was inducted into the National Academies of Practice.

**Laura Murphy**, PhD, MSN, RNC-OB, clinical assistant professor, was promoted to graduate advisor.

**Kavita Radhakrishnan**, PhD, MSEE, RN, FAAN, associate professor, was named the inaugural director of the Luci Baines Johnson and Ian J. Turpin Center for Gerontological Nursing. She was also elected as a Fellow of the American Heart Association.

**Hyekyun Rhee**, PhD, RN, FAAN, professor, was appointed to the La Quinta Motor Inns, Inc. Centennial Professorship in Nursing.

**Joshua Thomas**, DNP, RN, CNE, clinical assistant professor, completed his Doctor of Nursing Practice at the School of Nursing.

**Whitney Thurman**, PhD, RN, associate professor, was one of 16 nurse scientists accepted to the fourth cohort of the Betty Irene Moore Fellowship for Nurse Leaders and Innovators.

**Cara Young**, PhD, APRN, FNP-C, FAANP, FAAN, associate professor, received a Colleen Conway-Welch Award for National Leadership in honor of her broad impact on health care.

**Bo Xie**, PhD, FGSA, professor, has received a \$561,417 grant from the National Institute on Aging in the National Institutes of Health for a high-priority R56 research project titled *Tailoring Responses to AD/DRD Caregivers' Information Wants Through Human-Machine Collaboration*.

### Alumni

**Katherine (Kat) Carroll Britt**, MSN, RN, PhD ’22, was named assistant director of the Luci Baines Johnson and Ian J. Turpin Center for Gerontological Nursing.

**Allison Ferro**, PhD ’23, a Major in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, received the 3rd place PhD abstract award, out of over 100 submitted, at the TriService Nursing Research Dissemination Conference in San Antonio.

**Brianna Garza**, BSN ’23, presented her abstract “Self-Concept Levels Among Pre-Licensure Nursing Students” at the International Council of Nurses 2023 Congress in July in Montreal, Canada.

**J. Taylor Harden**, PhD ’89, RN, FGSA, FAAN, was named the recipient of the Nursing Care of Older Adults Interest group of The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) Doris Schwartz Gerontological Nursing Award.

**Robin Page**, PhD ’06, was selected as a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing and will be inducted in October 2023. She was also selected as a Fellow in the American College of Nurse-Midwives in 2021.

**Tobechukwu Phillips**, BSN ’23, presented her research “The Influence of Mass Media’s Misrepresentation of African American Health Disparities During COVID-19 on Nursing Students” at the Sigma Theta Tau 34th International Nursing Research Congress in July in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

**Angela Preston**, PhD ’23, received the American Holistic Nurse Association 2023 Charlotte McGuire Graduate Scholarship Award.

**Megan Pfitzinger Lippe**, PhD ’16, MSN ’11, BSN ’09, was selected as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing and Fellow of the Academy of Nursing Education.

### Students

PhD student **Sohyeon Bang** was selected to receive a Continuing Fellowship from the Graduate School for 2023-24.

Sigma Theta Tau: Epsilon Chapter Awards: **Bo Ra Kim**, **Oscar Franco Rocha** and **Kristen L. Sinay** received STTI student scholarship awards.

**Sohyeon Bang** and **Bo Ra Kim** received STTI student grant awards.

**Oscar Franco Rocha** received the STTI Dolores Sands Award for Excellence in Nursing Research.

### In Memoriam

**Barbara Jordan Meyers** died peacefully at her home in Austin, on Nov. 11, 2022. When she turned 50, she attended the School of Nursing and practiced nursing until her retirement.

**Barbara M. Petrosino**, EdD, RN, died in her home at Longhorn Village in Austin on Oct. 10, 2022. She was a professor at the School of Nursing and also served as assistant dean of the Undergraduate Nursing Program.

**Laura Swarts**, MSN, clinical instructor and engineering graduate from MIT, passed away on August 26, 2023. She was one of our outstanding AEMSN graduates from the Gero CNS program and was a clinical instructor from 2014 to 2022.

### Staff

**Heather Becker**, PhD, research scientist, was inducted as an honorary member of the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing. She will be recognized at Sigma’s 47th Biennial Convention in November 2023, in San Antonio, Texas.

**Margaret Hill**, assistant dean for administration, retired in December 2022, after serving 21 years at the School of Nursing.

**Meera Rajagopalan**, director of Clinical & Career Services at the School of Nursing, received the Outstanding Faculty/Staff Volunteer Award at the 2023 UT Tower Awards Ceremony. She was also named one of Austin’s 2023 Extraordinary Women by the Austin American-Statesman.



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