



VCU School of Nursing

Magazine for Alumni & Friends, Winter '23

Connections



COMMUNITY OF CARE

The Richmond Health and Wellness Program celebrates its tenth year and looks to what's next (pg.6)

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FROM THE DEAN



I am so excited for this issue of Connections magazine. The following pages are brimming with some of the most exciting news in the school's history.

I'M PROUD TO SHARE THAT THE VCU SCHOOL of Nursing's undergraduate program is ranked No. 22 in the latest U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges rankings released earlier this fall, up one spot from last year and placing it **in the top 4% of all undergraduate nursing programs nationwide**. I am also delighted to announce that the school has received the largest gift in its history—a \$13 million gift made by Joanne and Bill Conway that will provide need-based **scholarships for over 1,000 undergraduate and doctoral nursing students** over the next five years. Truly, this is an extraordinary time of recognition and opportunity for our school and its programs.

I hope you will enjoy this issue—

Jean Giddens, Ph.D., RN, FAAN
Dean and professor
Doris B. Yingling Endowed Chair

JEAN GIDDENS

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS



School of Nursing faculty Cate Matzke (left) and Amber Paulus (right) chat with new CNO, Tina Mammone.

TINA MAMMONE, ▲

Ph.D., RN, was welcomed as the new chief nursing officer of VCU Medical Center at a reception this past October. "We look forward to continuing to grow our partnership between the school and the VCU Health System," said Jean Giddens, Ph.D., professor and dean of the VCU School of Nursing and Doris B. Yingling Endowed Chair. Mammone joined VCU Medical Center in August from Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, in Portland, Oregon, where she served as chief nursing officer.

➔ 577 DONORS MADE CONTRIBUTIONS

of \$3.9 million dollars to support the School of Nursing in fiscal year 2022 including the creation of a new professorship (the Betsy A. Bampton Professorship) and four student support funds (the Ann Duffer Nursing Scholarship, the Dr. Barbara H. Dunn Nursing Scholarship, the Vicki and Charlie Tedeschi Memorial Fund, and the SON Student Emergency Fund). The school's faculty and staff also had the highest participation percentage in the annual VCU employee giving campaign across the university at 49.1%.



The VCU School of Nursing's undergraduate program ranked No. 22 in the country in its category in rankings

released this fall, up one spot from last year. The School of Nursing's undergraduate program offers two prelicensure pathways for students to become a nurse – the traditional B.S. and accelerated B.S., and an RN to B.S. pathway for registered nurses to obtain a bachelor's degree.

MICHELLE EDMONDS,

DNP, MSN, RN, joined the School of Nursing at the start of the academic year as the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Program and Department Chair Family and Community Health Nursing. Prior to joining VCU, she served as Dean of Nursing, Allied Health, and Natural Science for Southside Virginia Community College. In her new role, she will lead oversight of the undergraduate nursing program to ensure the curriculum is consistent with the mission and goals of the school.

JOSEPH DeRANIERI,

DM, MSN, RN, BCECR, Assistant Professor in the Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems, has been appointed as the Interim Director for the Langston Center for Innovation in Quality and Safety, a center that promotes patient-centered, population-focused and cost-effective initiatives designed to improve health care. His appointment follows the retirement of Michael Bleich, Ph.D., RN, NEA-BC, FNAP, FAAN, who served as the center's director since January 2019.

LATHIKA MOHANRAJ,

PhD, RN, BMTCN, Assistant Professor, Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems, was elected to the International Society of Nurses in Genetics (ISONG) Board of Directors starting November 2022.

KIMBERLY CLARK,

MSN, RN, CCRN, Clinical Instructor, Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems, and MARY FALK, MSN, RN, CCRN, PCCN, CNL, Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems, both received Honorable Mention for the Virginia Nurses Foundation Leadership Excellence Awards-Nurse Educator Category this fall.

JANE CHUNG,

Ph.D., RN, Assistant Professor, Department of Family and Community Health Nursing, was recognized with the Award of Excellence in Nursing Research by the Sigma Theta Tau International Gamma Omega at-large Chapter in May 2022.



VCU PARKINSON'S AND MOVEMENT DISORDERS CENTER

has awarded Ingrid Pretzer-Aboff, Ph.D., R.N., associate professor in the department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems, and co-investigators with funds to improve treatment options for Parkinson's patients who experience freezing of gait (FoG), a devastating symptom affecting 60% of those with the disease.



TARA TALBOTT, ►

RN (B.S.'16/N; M.S.'19/N) was honored by VCU Alumni as a top 10 Under 10. Tara is the Chief Nursing Officer for VCU Health Tappahannock. She earned a bachelor's in nursing and a master's in nursing administration and leadership, and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree at VCU. In her current role, Talbott institutes best practices to foster more positive experiences for patients and practitioners alike.



The SON Office of Student Success hosted a much-needed mid semester caffeine break for our hard-working students on October 10.

COMMUNITY OF CARE

NOW IN ITS TENTH YEAR, THE RICHMOND HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAM BRINGS CARE COORDINATION TO THE DOORSTEP OF VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES IN CENTRAL VIRGINIA



UNIVERSITY-SPONSORED HEALTH clinics are common across the nation, but the Richmond Health and Wellness Program (RHWP) spearheaded by the VCU School of Nursing has earned a reputation as a model for holistic care coordination. Started in 2012, the program delivers weekly wellness clinics that focus on health assessment, monitoring, and coaching in five community-based sites across the Richmond region. Powered by about 100 VCU students guided by faculty each semester, RHWP offers education on effective chronic disease self-management, wellness coaching through healthy cooking demonstrations and diet management education, and care coordination to proactively manage other health issues and related social needs before they develop into emergencies. **Last year alone, the program served 437 unique individuals over a total of 2,883 visits.**

AN INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL MODEL

In ten years the program has evolved, incorporating students from across VCU's health science disciplines including nursing, pharmacy, medicine, social work, physical therapy, occupational therapy, health and kinesiology, and psychology. Participants can take part in clinic either with a scheduled 30-minute wellness visit or as a walk-in for unplanned or immediate needs. Kathie Falls, MSN, RN, ANP-BC, Director of Clinical Operations for RHWP, explains that identifying gaps in care, supporting referrals, and promoting self-efficacy and self-management are key services that the program delivers. "RHWP is a safety net for our participants who are at high risk for negative health outcomes. Our healthcare system is complicated and can be hard to navigate when a person has limited access to transportation, technology, or low health literacy. We know that if we can connect people to services and necessary resources and provide tailored education, we can help people self-manage their healthcare needs and improve outcomes," she says.

Visits frequently center around **helping residents understand their conditions, how to proactively manage them and connecting them to information and resources.** "By meeting people where they are and really listening to what's important to them, we can tailor our services to their specific needs, which makes all the difference. We're here to advocate for people and empower them to ask for what they need. When necessary, we can step in and help them articulate their needs to providers and health care workers whether in the emergency room or in their primary care provider's office. We can help them tell their story," Falls says.

REAL LIFE LESSONS

RHWP presents a range of opportunities for students to test out their future in collaborative health care. Clinic days start with a debrief from a program leader to touch on any immediate health concerns for any scheduled participants as well as ➡

➡ general updates for the day. Then, students are given space to help participants independently, making notes on each visit using a shared secure data records platform with the program leader and staff available nearby for support. Students rotate through various positions during their time with the clinic. For example they might be assigned to assist with monitoring blood pressure or glucose one day, then provide more comprehensive self-management and education during the next visit. Following participant visits, program leaders and students reconvene to review notes and create a plan for the participant's next visit.

Opportunities for students to integrate practice in a clinic setting like those that RHWP provides are invaluable. Kimberly Battle, Ph.D., FNP-BC, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Family and Community Health Nursing, describes the potential of the learning environment students experience in RHWP clinics and how it is integral to their understanding of health promotion and wellness implementation. "We have to realize with our students that everyone comes from different backgrounds. **It's important to teach students compassion, to teach them how to relate so that**

they can integrate into their own practice, how they think about affordability. Having [the student] ask 'Is this realistic? This plan that I am developing for my participant that I'm interacting with?'" she explains. As Battle shares with those students in clinic that she supervises, the most instructive and influential lessons may come from an unexpected source. "We teach students how to listen to the participants and how they can learn from everyone," she says.

Many students who start with RHWP to satisfy a service-learning requirement opt to continue their service. As a result, the School of Nursing is working to create an elective version of the course as well as a badge pathway so students can continue providing community service and receive either credit or recognition for their work as they move toward graduation and seek employment. The deep engagement and strong rapport RHWP has with its participants is indicative of the quality of interactions with program leaders and students. "Social isolation is a huge issue for older adults in general, particularly older adults with limited income. The pandemic absolutely made this situation worse. At RHWP, we provide a forum for an intergenerational connection between our participants

and the students who are able to listen to the concerns and needs of our participants and provide tailored education and feedback," says Falls. **"I see it all the time—our participants open up to students about things they've been afraid to ask in the past.** Maybe they're embarrassed or haven't been able to find the words, but they ask the students and they get an answer"

NEW HORIZONS

With a decade of success as its foundation, RHWP continues to grow. A recent grant of nearly \$4 million in funding from the Health Resources & Services Administration will enable the program to reach new communities with the addition of a mobile van. "We are taking our program on the road [...W]e have such a history with our program that we recognize that there are hot spots for chronic disease. We look forward to bringing a prescription produce program to these areas. We look forward to bringing our Richmond Health and Wellness interprofessional educational model. And, we look forward to bringing the nursing students to these areas where we can bring our education and care coordination and start to build trust and rapport in these areas and establish these relationships," says Battle.

VISITS BY THE NUMBERS

Last academic year, clinics across five sites served **437** individuals in **2,883** visits.

Over **1,400** students have participated since the program began.

In fall of 2022, **122** students completed their clinical rotations with RHWP including **38** undergraduate nursing students, **38** nurse practitioner students, **38** pharmacy students, **4** medical students and **4** doctorate of physical therapy students.

66% of visits included discussion about positive health behaviors, including strategies to manage hypertension, how to adhere to a medication schedule, and ways to improve diet

59% of visits included general education about diseases and medication

14% of visits included discussion about nutrition and food programs such as Meals On Wheels, SNAP, and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program offered by the USDA

28% of visits included discussion about positive health behaviors

12% of visits involved coordinating continued care with other health professionals

19% of visits resulted in a referral to a professional outside of the participant's routine care



RECOVER STUDY

VCU SCHOOL OF NURSING LEADS RESEARCH CONSORTIUM TO STUDY LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF COVID-19 IN CHILDREN.

A TEAM OF RESEARCHERS AND CLINICIANS at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing is leading a multi-institutional project aimed at studying the long-term health effects of COVID-19 in infants, children, adolescents and young adults. In the planning stages since September 2021, researchers are now enrolling participants. The goal is to better understand the prevalence and impact of long-lasting COVID-19 symptoms ("long COVID") in children and young adults to develop effective treatments in the future.

The project is part of the **Researching COVID to Enhance Recovery (RECOVER) initiative, a nationwide study funded by the National Institutes of Health.** Much of what is known about long COVID-19 is based on studies in adults, but less understood are the effects in children and adolescents. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that, as of February 2022, about 75% of children and adolescents in the United States have had COVID-19.

"The RECOVER project is going to help us understand long COVID so we might develop treatments for those affected by the pandemic for years to come, but **it's also going to give back to the families deciding to participate in the study by understanding important information** about their children's development, health and mental well-being," said Amy Salisbury, Ph.D., professor and associate dean for research, scholarship and innovation at VCU School of Nursing, who serves as one of the principal investigators of enrollment sites for the RECOVER initiative. "This is an opportunity to help us find answers on how COVID-19 is impacting families over time and what we can do to minimize these effects."

The VCU School of Nursing is leading the efforts of a research consortium made up of VCU, Rhode Island Hospital and NYU Langone Health, but the RECOVER project is enrolling people across the nation.

For the VCU study site, the research team aims to recruit approximately 240 families with children, adolescents or young adults age 25 or younger in central Virginia. Families can learn more about this initiative and sign up to participate through the project's website. The research team enrolls interested families at various community events around Richmond ➡

➡ The researchers are looking for children, teens and young adults who have had any symptoms from COVID-19, whether many or just one or two symptoms. Those who have not had COVID-19 are also welcome to join because they are equally important to better understand how living during a pandemic affects a person's health and development regardless of whether they became infected.

The project is split into three phases, each with different kinds of assessments. In the first phase, the research team will survey participants on their health and well-being and collect biological samples, such as saliva and a tiny bit of blood. The second and third phases will involve clinical assessments on some participants over the next several years to assess their health, including their lungs, heart and neurodevelopment.

To make it easy for enrolled families to complete the assessments, VCU School of Nursing will create pop-up clinics in neighborhoods within Richmond and the surrounding area.

"We know that coming downtown to our facilities is not feasible for some families. By bringing our research closer to participants, we hope to make it easier for everyone interested in this project to be involved," said Patricia Kinser, Ph.D., endowed professor and assistant dean for research at VCU School of Nursing, and co-leader at the VCU site with Salisbury. Kinser hopes it will also attract a more diverse audience. "To ensure we develop the best treatments for everybody, it's critical that a diversity of experiences is represented in this project," Kinser said.

Families involved in the project are paid for their participation, as well as have access to their children's results from the study. The pop-up clinics are equipped with privacy screens, air conditioners and heaters, among other amenities, to ensure that participants are comfortable.



Families in Virginia who are interested in participating can learn more here.

"This is an opportunity to help us find answers on how COVID-19 is impacting families over time and what we can do to minimize these effects."

—Amy Salisbury, Ph.D., professor and associate dean for research, scholarship and innovation, VCU School of Nursing

For the VCU study site, the research team aims to recruit approximately 240 families with children, adolescents or young adults age 25 or younger in central VA.



THE RECOVER PROJECT IS ENROLLING PEOPLE ACROSS THE NATION.



RESEARCHERS ARE LOOKING FOR CHILDREN, TEENS & YOUNG ADULTS.



PARTICIPANTS CAN HAVE HAD NONE, FEW, OR MANY SYMPTOMS TO ENROLL.



STUDENT STORY



ADITI BHANDARI

VCU SCHOOL OF NURSING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ADITI Bhandari is part of a generation of students defining a new nursing identity. Whether she's speaking to incoming students and nervous parents about the demands of nursing school as a student ambassador, bonding with friends after a tough day in clinicals, or learning firsthand the impact of community engagement programs, Bhandari shows up and works hard.

From the very start, Bhandari knew that the collaborative ethos of the VCU School of Nursing was something she was looking for and the kind of community she wanted to learn and grow in. **"I only applied to VCU's nursing school," she said, "I didn't want to go anywhere else."** She was attracted to nursing school as a path to a meaningful career with ample employment options and future educational opportunities. "Something that excites me about entering the profession is how broad the nursing field is. You don't have to be a bedside nurse if you don't want to—you could work in a doctor's office, a clinic of some sort,

I am willing to join the fight and make whatever degree of difference I can in the future alongside other nurses.

or out in the community. There are so many places that need a nurse," she said.

Bhandari's cohort is a close knit community of fewer than one hundred students who complete their courses and clinical hours with many of the same professors. She's enjoyed the camaraderie and lessons learned with and from her classmates. "I have been surprised by how teamwork-oriented nursing or even just nursing school is." Bhandari, like many in her cohort, gains valuable nursing skills and experience outside of the walls of the classroom as well. As a research assistant for the Richmond Health and Wellness Program (RHWP), she supports a larger effort to deliver health promotion and prevention programs for vulnerable older adults and disabled adults residing in low-income housing settings in Richmond. **Through her work with RHWP, she has had a chance to participate in community engaged research and strengthen her collaboration skills.** Bhandari has found the experience to be especially rewarding. "Seeing residents that are trying their best to keep their health optimal despite their health conditions and getting to hear from multiple personal care assistants about their wisdom in the healthcare field has been insightful," she said.

Following graduation, Bhandari plans to get her start as a bedside nurse, and given some of the recent challenges faced by healthcare providers, is steeling herself with an extra dose of determination to make a difference. "I am willing to join the fight and make whatever degree of difference I can in the future alongside other nurses," she said.

A HISTORIC GIFT

VCU SCHOOL OF NURSING RECEIVES LARGEST GIFT IN SCHOOL'S HISTORY TO FUND STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

THE VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH University School of Nursing received a \$13 million gift made by philanthropists Joanne and Bill Conway through their Bedford Falls Foundation-DAF. The gift, the largest in the school's history, will enable the school to provide scholarships to reduce the cost of a nursing education for more than 1,000 undergraduate and doctoral students over the next five years.

Currently, over 70% of undergraduate nursing students at VCU qualify for a need-based scholarship. With the latest gift, the school can double the total amount of scholarship support for students and increase the number of scholarships awarded by 37% over the next five years.

Since 2019, the Conways have provided more than \$18.5 million to support the VCU School of Nursing through their philanthropic vehicles. Their latest contribution also enables the school to welcome more students.

"The Conways' gift comes at an extraordinary time in our school's growth," Giddens said. "Many of our programs will increase

enrollment in the coming years. At a time when the nation is facing persistent nursing shortages, funds like these are particularly critical to ensure a strong and diverse future nursing workforce."

A 2020 National Nursing Workforce Study confirmed a lack of diversity in nursing, with over 80% of registered nurses identifying as white/caucasian. And more than one-fifth of all nurses reported plans to retire from nursing by 2025, intensifying the current nursing shortage.

The latest gift amplifies the impact VCU's School of Nursing has on health care in Virginia and beyond. Half of currently enrolled students are nonwhite and more than 90% of graduates work in Virginia. "VCU School of Nursing is proud to graduate the largest and most diverse group of prelicensure nursing professionals in Virginia," Giddens said.

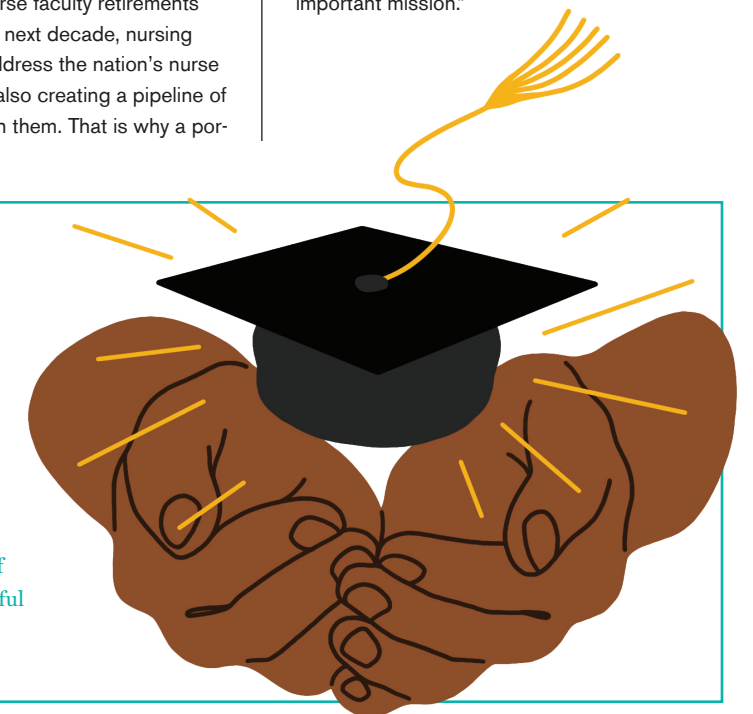
With a wave of nurse faculty retirements expected over the next decade, nursing schools cannot address the nation's nurse shortage without also creating a pipeline of educators to teach them. That is why a por-

tion of the Conway donation is earmarked for doctoral students committed to teaching.

"Nurses are essential," Bill Conway said. "Joanne and I believe that, by reducing the financial burden for nursing students at VCU School of Nursing, the school will be better equipped to expand its programs to address the critical nursing shortage. When nurses face a lower debt burden, they can more easily achieve their personal and professional goals."

"VCU is honored to be a part of the Conways' great vision to create healthier communities through strengthening the nursing pipeline," said Michael Rao, Ph.D., president of VCU and VCU Health. "With their latest gift, they help ensure that our School of Nursing graduates will be at the forefront of that work. At VCU, we put the needs of students and patients first, and this gift advances that important mission."

"THIS GIFT WILL FUNDAMENTALLY TRANSFORM THE VCU SCHOOL OF NURSING PROGRAM, allowing us to offer much-needed financial support to our students who are the future of the nursing profession," said Jean Giddens, Ph.D., professor and dean of the VCU School of Nursing. **"The Conways' generosity will have an enormous impact on building a diverse pipeline of early career nurses and future researchers and gives VCU the important responsibility of educating and delivering that workforce. I am deeply grateful for their commitment to our students."**



GAINING SPEED



\$1,930,592

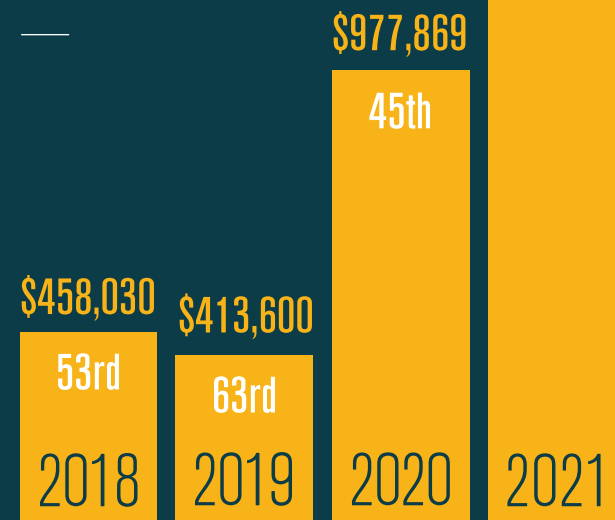
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THE VCU SCHOOL OF NURSING HAS MADE GREAT STRIDES IN research funding in the last several years. In 2017, the school was not ranked by the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research (BRIMR), an independent organization that reports and ranks schools funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). **In the last available rankings report, BRIMR lists VCU School of Nursing 32nd in the country in NIH funding of 85 nursing schools included in the report.**

Behind all of this momentum is the **VCU SON Office of Research, Scholarship and Innovation—a team of administrative leaders and staff that coordinate resources to facilitate productive research and scholarship;** provide support, host workshops and offer mentoring opportunities to researchers; and manage a full range of biostatistics/data services and biobehavioral research laboratory services.

"The growing success of the research and scholarship within the VCU School of Nursing is the cumulative result of the school's investments in scholarship, the faculty's passion for improving health equity in our communities, and a strategic plan to synthesize and integrate knowledge and skills with the school and across the university. The scope of research and scholarship has grown substantially through a team science approach that will foster rapid discovery and innovative solutions that promote health, prevent disease, and eradicate health disparities. The new programs and innovations will also be used **to grow educational opportunities for students and sustain nursing education and workforce development**."—Amy Salisbury, Ph.D., RN, professor and associate dean for research, scholarship and innovation

NIH DIRECT DOLLARS BRIMR RANKINGS



MAJOR GRANTS FUNDED

- \$5.4M over 4 years** [NIH/RECOVER]
Life-course examination of genomics, affect, and neurocognitive changes following COVID-19 Infection: the LEGACI cohort
- \$3.9M over 4 years** [HRSA]
Mobile Health and Wellness Program
- \$1.46M over 3 years** [HRSA]
Strength in Caring
- \$166K** [HRSA]
Nurse Faculty Loan Program

FACULTY NEWS

AAN FELLOWS

TWO SCHOOL OF NURSING FACULTY SELECTED AS AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSING FELLOWS

THE SELECTED FACULTY MEMBERS WERE AMONG 250 nurse leaders chosen to join the AAN's 2022 class of fellows.

Two faculty members from Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Nursing received **one of the most prestigious honors in nursing** this fall when they were inducted as fellows of the American Academy of Nursing. The faculty members were among 250 nurse leaders selected to join the academy's 2022 class of fellows. **The inductees were recognized for their significant contributions** to health and health care at the academy's annual Health Policy Conference held in October in Washington D.C.



TERRY JONES, Ph.D., an associate professor, leads the Nursing Leadership and Organizational Science Concentration within the School of Nursing's Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems. In this role, she oversees a variety of courses that equip students for success today while they strive to build a better tomorrow. Additionally, Jones is involved in research that focuses on **improving the nursing work environment and the quality and safety of nursing care across the health care continuum**. Her work also analyzes factors that impact leadership development for health care disciplines, such as managerial coaching relationships, graduate education and service-based continuing education. She received the President's Award for Outstanding Service from the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nursing in 2021 and the Billye Brown Award for Excellence in Leadership in 2016.

INGRID PRETZER-ABOFF, Ph.D., an associate professor and senior nurse researcher, has worked with people with Parkinson's disease and their family members in acute care, community and research settings for more than 30 years. Her research focuses on developing **interventions that optimize function and improve the daily life and independence of people with this disorder**. Her contributions to this field include establishing efficacy-based, function-focused community care programs and co-founding the first nurse-managed Parkinson's telehealth clinic in the United States. Most recently she continues her quest to **improve lives of people with Parkinson's** by developing and testing a novel medical device that reduces the motor symptoms of the disease by delivering stimulation to the nervous system. Pretzer-Aboff is an affiliate scholar of the VCU Langston Center for Innovation in Quality & Safety and a fellow of the Gerontological Society of America.



#VCU GIVING DAY

THE VCU SCHOOL OF NURSING HOSTED ITS FIRST-EVER GIVING DAY ON THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2022.

DURING THE 24-HOUR FUNDRAISER FILLED WITH challenges, donor thank-yous and more black and gold emojis than you could count, **the school raised a total of \$54,661.** The majority of funds raised supported the schools' student emergency fund, a critical resource for one-time relief grants for current students that face unexpected financial hardship.

"Giving Day was an amazing opportunity for the school to give more visibility to philanthropy and how we can all make a difference when we join together in support of our students," said Jean Giddens, Ph.D., professor and dean of the VCU School of Nursing. Clever hashtags, a giving countdown clock and gifts from 119 donors helped earn the school several challenges including an impressive **49.1% participation by the school's faculty and staff.**



My gratitude goes to everyone who gave, posted and cheered us on for our first ever VCU Giving Day. Our alumni, friends, faculty and staff showed up big for our students and I'm so thankful for everyone's support.

—JEAN GIDDENS, PH.D., DEAN



SAVE THE DATE

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

May 3, 2023 is the next Giving Day!

NET FORCE

NURSING DEAN LEADS EFFORT TO RESHAPE THE FUTURE OF NURSING EDUCATION NATIONWIDE

JEAN GIDDENS, PH.D., DEAN OF THE VCU School of Nursing, co-lead a revision of the education standards that students need to know when they graduate from nursing schools across the country.

As the country's nearly 4 million nurses comprise the largest sector of the health care workforce, they are crucial to maintaining the safety of patients and ensuring they can receive lifesaving care.

Schools of nursing have a responsibility to graduate nurses who are well prepared for the current and future health care environment, said Jean Giddens, Ph.D., professor and dean of VCU School of Nursing.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing released its latest version of the "Essentials" in 2021, which will guide the future of nursing education for more than 850 member nursing schools across the country. Giddens was the co-chair of the national task force that revised educational standards for bachelor's, master's and clinical doctoral nursing programs – the competencies for what students should know and be able to do upon graduation.

The task force, with input from faculty, deans and nursing practice leaders nationwide, developed a new model and framework for nursing programs to ensure students are best prepared for the real world.

VCU News caught up with Giddens to find out more about how the revised standards will help nurses and, in turn, the patients they serve.

What led AACN to revise the Essentials?

Over the past decade, there have been multiple changes in all areas of our society – including population demographics, advancements in technology, new research discoveries – all of which have had impacts in higher education and in health care. The revised Essentials reflect the knowledge and skills needed by nurses now and into the future.

What does this transformation in nursing education look like?

The biggest changes represented in the Essentials is the transition to competency-based education, and the creation of a new two-level nursing education model. These changes will require a more intentional assessment of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of our students and should lead to greater consistency among our graduates.

How is the VCU School of Nursing implementing the new Essentials?

The VCU SON has formed an Essentials implementation task force – known as NETForce – comprising committed faculty who teach in undergraduate and graduate programs. Their goal is to redesign the curriculum in alignment with the new Essentials – including a robust competency-based assessment process – by September 2023, with hopes of implementing the revised curriculum by academic year 2024-25.

What impact do you anticipate these changes will make on the nursing workforce in the near future?

For years, there have been challenges with an academic-practice gap, meaning that students who graduate from nursing schools require significant onboarding and orientation during the first year of practice. This practice readiness phenomenon is a concern raised by employers across the country, with both new nurses for practice and nurses prepared at the graduate level. We expect that the Essentials competencies will closely align with the knowledge and skills needed to enter practice. Students taught under this new framework will be ready to practice sooner, which will be key in addressing the ongoing shortage of health care professionals.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



ZACH McCLUSKEY

ZACH McCLUSKEY (BSN '02/N, MHA '07/CHP) WAS HONORED this fall as one of VCU's Alumni Stars. The biennial event, hosted by VCU Alumni, honored alumni from across the university's academic units for their remarkable personal and professional achievements.

McCluskey began his career as a nurse working with critically ill children at VCU Health and transitioned to hospital leadership out of a commitment to the best outcomes for patients in the community he serves.

Over the course of his career, he has led larger and more complex hospitals. **In November 2021, he was named CEO of HCA Florida Fort Walton - Destin Hospital**, where he oversees the growing 309-bed, four-campus hospital that serves Okaloosa, Walton and Santa Rosa counties.

McCluskey began his career as a nurse working with critically ill children at VCU Health and transitioned to hospital leadership

From 2016-21, he served as CEO of HCA Healthcare's Johnston-Willis Hospital in Richmond, Virginia. **Under his leadership, JW was the first hospital in the U.S. to receive The Joint Commission Gold Seal of Approval for brain tumor care.** Prior to JW, he was CEO at Parham Doctors' Hospital, leading it to receive a top 5% national ranking for orthopaedic hospitals by U.S. News & World Report. He also has served as chief operating officer at StoneCrest Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee, and associate administrator at HCA Healthcare's CJW Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia.

McCluskey, who met his wife, Amanda, at the VCU School of Nursing, mentors VCU M.H.A. students and is a guest lecturer on hospital operations, particularly on topics that improve patient and employee engagement. He is a fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives and a member of the VCU Foundation Board of Trustees.



GERTRUDE HARVELL CLARKE

(BSN '46/N) celebrated her 100th birthday in 2022. A graduate of St. Philip Hospital School of Nursing-Medical College of Virginia, she relocated to New York after graduation where she remained until her retirement. During her lengthy nursing career, she was employed in the operating room and surgical services as well as teaching positions educating nursing assistants, practical nurses and registered nurses. Upon retirement from New York, she returned to Prince George County, Virginia. She is still active in sharing her experiences with the next generation of nursing students at Virginia State University, championing the importance of diversity and equitable practice in the profession and care.

DARLENE COFFEY FISHMAN,

Ed.D. (B.S.'71/N) writes, "I have three degrees: a bachelor's in nursing from VCU, a master's in nursing from California State University, Los Angeles (1978) and an Ed.D. in educational leadership from Cal State Fullerton. I worked for 10 years with various responsibilities in acute-care nursing settings. I started out at MCV Hospitals, moved to Denver and Los Angeles before moving into nursing education. I retired in fall of 2018 after 40 years in nursing education working with nursing students. I had a very fulfilling career. I am grateful to MCV-VCU for giving me my excellent foundational education and getting me started in my career."

PATRICIA KINSER, Ph.D. (B.S.'03/N;

Cert.'04/N; M.S.'04/N), assistant dean for research at the VCU School of Nursing, is among a group of VCU researchers who are joining a national team of scientists to investigate the impacts of long COVID-19 in children, teens, young adults and their parents. The project, the "Life-Course Examination of General Affect and Neurocognitive Changes Following COVID-19 Infection," is part of the National Institutes of Health's research studying the long-term impacts of the virus. She and Amy Salisbury, Ph.D., professor and associate dean of research at the VCU School of Nursing, will recruit families to see how the virus affects children's cognitive development and mental and physical health.

LYNDSEY HIGHLANDER (B.S.'20/N)

was part of a team that created a plan for an at-home COVID-19 testing kit that was chosen by the Clinton Global Initiative University's COVID-19 Student Action Fund. It was one of 38 chosen out of 1,400 submissions. The plan, called Safe at Home, emerged from a health care innovation project through the VCU da Vinci Center for Innovation in spring 2020.

RITA H. PICKLER (Cert '98/N), PhD,

RN, FAAN, FloAnn Sours Easton Endowed Professor of Child and Adolescent Health and director of the PhD program at The Ohio State University College of Nursing received the National Association of Neonatal Nurses (NANN) Lifetime Achievement Award for her commitment to and impact on the field of neonatal nursing. "I am honored to receive this award and grateful for the many colleagues who have collaborated with me on this work done on behalf of children and families," Pickler said. "Families with preterm babies need and deserve all of the support that nursing science can muster. I am proud of the work that we have done to advance both the study and practice that help these families and children achieve best outcomes."

ASIA OWENS (B.S.'14/N), a student

in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program at Radford University, has released an online research study, "Braking BPSD" (behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia), intended to engage caregivers for persons living with dementia.

POLLY RIVERA (B.S.'76/N)

was promoted in February 2022 to system director of clinical documentation integrity, coding and auditing at Riverside Health System in Newport News, Va.

CLASS NOTES

ELIZABETH HOETTELS, D.N.P.

(B.S.'05/N), was promoted to colonel by the U.S. Air Force. She previously served as lieutenant colonel commander of the 423rd Medical Squadron at the Limited Scope Medical Treatment Facility located at the Royal Air Force Base in Alconbury, United Kingdom.



U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Elizabeth Hoettels, 423rd Medical Squadron outgoing commander, speaks during a change of command ceremony at RAF Alconbury, England, June 7, 2021.

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vcualumni.org/alumni/classnotes

IN MEMORIAM

1940s

Cornelia K. Barron (B.S.'46/N), of Dublin, Ohio, March 3, 2022.
Margaret S. Berkley (Cert.'42/N), of Springfield, Va., Nov. 26, 2021.
Louauna S. Byrd (Cert.'48/N), of Virginia Beach, Va., Oct. 7, 2021.
Katherine W. Crouch (B.S.'45/N), of Mechanicsville, Va., Sept. 10, 2021.
Ann Steigleder (B.S.'48/N), of Farnham, Va., Aug. 10, 2022.
Eleanor P. Tate (B.S.'49/N), of Hertford, N.C., Jan. 31, 2022.

1960s

Judith H. Barton (B.S.'61/N), of Fredericksburg, Va., May 25, 2022.
Joan M. Bloomer (A.S.'61/N), of Richmond, Va., June 20, 2022.
Carole S. Morehead (B.S.'64/N), of Banco, Va., Oct. 14, 2021.
Elaine P. Norwood (Cert.'60/N), of Chapel Hill, N.C., Jan. 24, 2022.
Joy T. Texter (B.S.'67/N; M.S.'75/N), of Henrico, Va., July 27, 2022.

1970s

Bonnie C. Baldwin (B.S.'72/N), of Gulfport, Fla., April 22, 2022.
Bettie W. Brady (B.S.'76/N), of Ashland, Va., Aug. 1, 2022.
Deborah J. Denney (B.S.'73/N; M.S.W.'86/SW), of Henrico, Va., May 12, 2022.
Patricia W. Holloway (B.S.'77/N), of Manassas, Va., Sept. 9, 2022.
Betty G. Kenley (Cert.'70/N), of Mechanicsville, Va., May 31, 2022.
Jacqueline R. Rowland (B.S.'76/N; M.S.'78/N), of Henrico, Va., March 14, 2022.
Emily M. Thomas ('76/N; B.S.'78/N), of Columbia, S.C., Oct. 10, 2021.

1990s

Kathleen H. Bredberg (B.S.'93/N) of Sherman, Tx., Aug. 31, 2022.
Dana E. Brickey (B.S.'94/N), of Coeburn, Va., Jan. 12, 2022.
Kathleen L. Cox (Ph.D.'97/N) of Zion Crossroads, Va., Sept. 26, 2022.
Stuart Eisenberg (M.S.'96/N) of North Chesterfield, Va., June 7, 2022.
Mary P. Nothnagle Johnson (M.S.'95/N), of Norfolk, Va., Oct. 21, 2021.
Sandra D. Yehiel (B.S.'94/N) of South Hill, Va., October 4, 2022.

1950s

Barbara H. Brock (B.S.'50/N), of Greensboro, N.C., Oct. 4, 2021.
Ramona S. Friend (B.S.'57/N), of North Garden, Va., Aug. 20, 2022.
June P. Gwynn (B.S.'53/N), of Yanceyville, N.C., Nov. 19, 2021.
Mildred A. Hopkins (B.S.'53/N), of Roanoke, Va., March 19, 2022.
Margaret L. Lefebvre (B.S.'54/N), of Fort Walton Beach, Fla., Jan. 28, 2022.
Louise W. McConnell (B.S.'54/N), of Richmond, Va., Oct. 29, 2022.
Marian B. Neese (B.S.'50/N), of Raleigh, N.C., Oct. 10, 2022.
Ann M. Robertson (B.S.'51/N), of Lynchburg, Va., Dec. 27, 2021.
Dorothy M. Shepard (B.S.'57/N), of North Chesterfield, Va., March 20, 2022.
Doris W. Smith (B.S.'55/N), of Roanoke Rapids, N.C., Oct. 9, 2021.
Shirley A. Steel (B.S.'57/N), of Lutherville Timonium, Md., Dec. 24, 2021.

1980s

Daniel J. Arbogast (B.S.'85/N; Cert.'93/B), of Roanoke, Va., Oct. 3, 2022.
Mildred L. Friedman (M.S.'88/N), of Wytheville, Va., June 13, 2022.
Irene M. Gray (B.S.'80/N), of New Kent, Va., Jan. 25, 2022.
Jewel D. Hill (B.S.'88/N), of Petersburg, Va., Oct. 9, 2022.
Judith T. Rocchiccioli, Ph.D. (B.S.'81/N; Ph.D.'93/E), of Beaverdam, Va., Dec. 6, 2021.
Bolling Q. Scott (B.S.'84/N), of Midlothian, Va., April 1, 2022.

FLYING HIGH

WINGED SELFIES AT THE SCHOOL'S MOST INSTAGRAMMABLE SPOT

A pair of colorful wings created by the faculty and staff representing the school's mission to come together to help students reach new heights became a spot of celebration over the last semester—photos snapped after successful dissertation defenses, quick selfies with friends between classes and occasionally, a professional shot during a school-sponsored event.

READY TO SOAR



vcuson Nursing student Pamela Pan poses for a quick photo between classes. #vcunursing #flyinghigh

ANN STEIGLEDER

Ann Steigleder, a member of the Class of 1948 and a surgical nursing instructor at the School of Nursing from 1955 to 1965, passed away in August. As a faculty member under the leadership of Doris Yingling, dean of the school from 1958-



Ann Steigleder (left) with former dean (1991-2013), Nancy Langston

1981, Steigleder helped shape the curriculum for a graduate program for nurses, the first in Virginia. She championed nursing education as part of a team-oriented integrated patient experience—a novel approach for that time. Former students remember her unconventional and progressive teaching style, with many noting her insistence for critical thinking and clinical reasoning as the foundation for their later success.

With a bequest made at her passing, she established the Steigleder Endowed Chair for Research in the VCU School of Nursing, continuing her lifelong commitment to nursing research and leading change.

The VCU School of Nursing offers **guaranteed admission pathways** for all degree levels.

All students who graduate with the minimum of a bachelor's degree from the VCU School of Nursing are guaranteed admission to any SON graduate programs provided they meet the requirements for admission and program space availability.



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