Welcome
Dean Eun-Ok Im
UT Austin School of Nursing Welcomes its 4th Dean
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 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, familiar faces and know I’m where I belong. I am grateful to serve as dean. I am looking 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 standing job of teaching our students, and I look forward to 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 building on the best of our School and our profession and change the world.

Dean
Eun-Ok Im, PhD, MPH, RN, CNS, FAAN
ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR RESEARCH
Sharon Horner, PhD, RN, FAAN
SENIOR ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
Gayle Zimmerian, PhD, RN, CNS, FAAN, FNAP
ASSISTANT DEAN FOR ADMINISTRATION
Charla Carremon
ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR STUDENT SERVICES
Vinh Nguyen, PhD
ASSISTANT DEAN FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS
Arla Todd, PhD, RN
ASSISTANT DEAN FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS
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DIRECTOR, LEARNING ENHANCEMENT AND ACADEMIC PROGRESS CENTER
Leigh Goldstein, PhD, RN, ANP-BC
DIRECTOR OF PRACTICE INNOVATION
Sergio Delgado, MEd
CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
Charla Carremon
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Feedback welcome. Please contact us at nursing@nursing.utexas.edu to let us know what you think about this issue of Longhorn Nursing.

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UT Austin School of Nursing Welcomes Dean Eun-Ok Im

In September 2023, UT Austin welcomed back Eun-Ok Im, PhD, MPH, as the dean of the School of Nursing. Im is internationally recognized for her 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 Honors Chair Endowed Chair in the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing at Emory University in Atlanta, as the associate dean for Research Development and Regulatory Assistance, 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 he jumped to his death, 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 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 Lecture 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 2013 Duk-Kiu 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 top 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. 
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) 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

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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 Walen-sk, former director of the CDC, Visit ing 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. “Every-thing 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 gaining space for individu als 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 and addressing problems. She explained how the agency’s experience in rapid emergency response coupled with expertise in chronic conditions, given its disproportionate impact on certain 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 infrastructural 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 forward-leaning, they 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 environ mental factors around them, the organizational entities that support their work, whether in the public or private sector, need to do the same. Maintaining this kind of focused effort isn’t easy, but it is essential.”

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NURSING.UTEXAS.EDU

“Nursing is definitely a professional connection, but it was a cultural experience.”

“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 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.”

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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, FACCN, 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 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.”
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 numbers 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 University of Texas at Austin 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 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 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’ve 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 may not get in clinicals and wouldn’t get until they are in the hospital 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 in 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.”

Students enhance their clinical training with virtual simulation to increase readiness for real-life patient care.
Faculty Research to Assess Widespread Impact of Cognitive Change in Cancer Survivors

A n 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 Heneghan, 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.

Heneghan 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,” Heneghan said. “Oftentimes, these two types of measures do not correlate, oppose to snapshot assessments obtained in research settings, this study includes participants’ assessment of their cognitive functioning “in the wild” using smartphone technology. "Our goal for this study," she adds, "is to provide important data for establishing best practices for using self-report measures for these uses. Heneghan 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."

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

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

As Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (AD/DRD) 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.

As a nurse, Assistant Professor Ashley Heneghan, PhD, RN, FAAN, has focused on alleviating unwanted symptoms and optimizing wellness for individuals with chronic diseases, including cancer.
A year in photos
School Establishes the Luci Baines Johnson and Ian J. Turpin Center for Gerontological Nursing

The 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 J. 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.

The Center will provide innovative opportunities to gerontological 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 gerontological 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.

As director, Radhakrishnan will provide a vision 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’s leadership team aims to leverage UT development activities in leadership, peer review, translational research, and 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.

“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.”

Ian Turpin, Luci Baines Johnson and Dr. Kavita Radhakrishnan
Music Can Heal Wounds Medicine Cannot Touch: Research on Music for Patients and Caregivers

Cognitive impairment can occur in as many as 80 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 collaboration between the School of Nursing and Dell Medical School, Phillips is working with Shelli Keder, 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 preferential 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.

“When 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 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 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 nurses’ families who 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 past experiences.

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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 30 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.”
Both graduates’ projects grew from their participation in the nursing honors program at UT.

For Garza, the presentation of her research at the Sigma Theta Tau 34th International Nursing Research Congress in Abu Dhabi illuminated factors that impact the self-concept of professional nurse self-concept as a potential solution to the worldwide nursing shortage. At the ICN Congress, she 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 instrument, she investigated associations between multiple factors and UT BSN student self-concept. Garza found that race/ethnicity will not receive 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 stem from conducting research. "Do not minimize the opportunities and doors that research can open," she said.

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. Tobii Phillips, also an honors student, was a Forty Acres Scholar. During the school year, she was interested in research and education. Taking an active role in the health care community, she found ways to help others through her 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 UT MRC 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. UTMC currently has approximately 300 active members. To meet the challenge of providing thousands of vaccinations during the COVID-19 pandemic, UTMC helped UT Health, Austin Public Health and Ascension Texas recruit, train and organize over 600 medical and lay volunteers to assist the vaccination of over 100,000 individuals. Phillips’ role was to ensure that clinics had sufficient clinical staff to administer the vaccine and enough individuals to perform a variety of tasks, such as checking in patients and monitoring observation rooms.

UTMC 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, UTMC 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 UTMC 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 UTMC to be disaster prepared—we can all be prepared. UTMC 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."
S

cchool of Nursing students and off-
cers of the UT Austin Nursing Stu-
dents’ Association Huy Le, Alexis Maceda, Chardelene Reyes and Kahlu Shertrod, along with faculty advisor Jenni-
fer Filippo, 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 pro-
fession, network with other passionate individuals who are engaged in innova-
tive research and initiatives and vote on evidence-informed resolutions written by students to address gaps within nursing. This year’s theme was “Reflection: A Cata-
lyst for Change.”

All members of the UTNSA had the opportunity to work on a resolution to be voted on at the NSNA convention. To do so, the UT group submitted a resolution call-
ing for education on harm reduction to be included in 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 had as nursing students,” Le said. “In a room filled with nursing students and other nursing pro-
fessionals, we felt nervous and excited that the issue … was considered important to

nursing students and other nursing pro-

fessionals 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 “physically experience the effects of trauma due to COVID-19, a total of 11 – from nurs-
ing and six from other UT col-

leges 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, stu-
dents 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 citi-
zens with universal health care coverage and offers some of the highest quality health care in Latin America. Students participated in 

experiences in 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 organi-

zations are doing.

The students get to see things differ-

ently and see what’s going on in the world, which gives them a new perspective,” Guil-

let said. “It really is a worldview because we are so focused on turning and if eye-

opening to see people who have less resources in developing countries and how

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 profession-

als. “The hope is that students will take what they have learned in Costa Rica and advo-
cate 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 trans-

formative,” she admitted, but the students’ evident growth, their increased open-mind-

edness 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’ll one day be global citizens and see how we’re all connected, and this is prob-
ably 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 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 pro-
totypes to prevent wounds with locally sourced devices. The other two teams created educational material in Eng-
lish and Swahili, and the final team con-
ducted a qualitative study on the barriers and facilitators to wound care prevention and treatment in the hospital. Students presented their projects to key stake hold-
er for feedback and further development. They also learned about current training and treatment and observed wound care treatment done by nurses with patients with severe wounds.

“This trip was unique because it was interdisciplinary and brought professionals 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 leader-

ship roles with their peers, as they had the most experience and knowledge about patient care.”

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

Undergraduate Students Successfully Push for Resolution on Harm Reduction Education at NSNA Convention

Relaunch of Study Abroad Programs

Award for Global Learning took 13 UT Austin undergraduate students, including two nurs-
ing students, along with Associ-
ate 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.

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ship 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 organizers.

Fifty-seven high school students participated in several nursing activities, including hands-on skills, virtual reality, simulations, literacy, and understanding of the field of nursing. DeAnna Baker, Learning Enhancement and Academic Progress Center 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 organizers.

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Nursing student and camp counselor Anne Del Barrio volunteered to meet high school students who were interested in nursing and 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, maturation 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 nursing and wanted to know more about nursing. COVID-19 unexpectedly 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 IT 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’s a good head start for them to see what’s ahead this next year. While they are learning, I’m learning with them.”

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“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 nursing is a rewarding career, and that they might choose nursing as their future profession.

Across the U.S., faculty shortages at nursing schools are limiting student capacity while also 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, CN, 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).

A second set of videos in the toolkit promote careers in nursing education and 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 in 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 bootstrap in August with intensive training, interactive activities and simulations related to clinical teaching. The bootstrap 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 elsewewhere 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 clinical teaching of practical clinical teaching — 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 nurses 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

For 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 a new initiative in 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.

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 to help them financially.”

The School of Nursing is appreciative of the support and education they need to improve health care. “We are grateful to the Kleins for their belief in their financial generosity through the Forty Acres Scholarship Program,” Dean Im-Ok Im said.

Social Resource Center Provides Additional Support for Families in Del Valle

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 once 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, 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 allow 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 leaders who take ideas to scale that advance high-quality, high-value care and optimal health outcomes.

### Alumni

Katherine (Kat) Carroll Brittl, MSN, RN, PhD, ‘23, 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.

### 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. Slauson 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 Class of 2022 and was a clinical instructor from 2024 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 April 2024.

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

Meera Rajagopalan, director of Clinical & Cancer 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.
Thanks to her education at the School of Nursing, Kim Chapman knew she wanted to work as a cardiovascular surgery nurse. Through her and her husband Jeffrey’s gift to support nursing education, tomorrow’s health care future looks much brighter.

To learn how you can support the future of nursing, visit utexas.edu/nursing/support or contact Sergio Delgado, chief development officer, at sdelgado@nursing.utexas.edu or call 512.694-8751