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Celebrating a Legend:

Dean Emerita Billye J. Brown



The University of Texas at Austin
School of Nursing



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A MESSAGE FROM Dean Eun-Ok Im

As we look to the future of health care, the importance of strong, compassionate and innovative leadership has never been clearer. At The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing, we are deeply committed to preparing the next generation of nurses who will lead the way in transforming health care systems and improving patient outcomes through research and clinical practice.

This issue of the magazine is especially meaningful as we honor the life and legacy of Dean Emerita Billye J. Brown, founding dean and a transformative leader in nursing education. Dr. Brown's visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to advancing the profession laid the foundation for the School's continued excellence. Her impact is still felt today in the strength of our programs, the caliber of our students and the values we uphold as a community.

Nurses today are more than caregivers—they are changemakers, policy advocates, educators and innovators. The UT Austin School of Nursing is dedicated to providing our students with the tools, knowledge and mentorship to become the leaders who will drive positive change. From pioneering research in nursing to taking on leadership roles in health care organizations, in this issue, you will see how our faculty, students and alumni are making a significant impact on health care.

This commitment to excellence has been recognized once again with our Master of Science in Nursing program ranking #12 in the latest U.S. News & World Report rankings, #6 among public universities, and as the top-ranked school in Texas—an achievement that reflects the dedication of our faculty and the high quality of our students. This rise in national rankings is a testament to our unwavering focus on academic excellence, evidence-based practice and leadership development in nursing education.

Beyond our local impact, the School of Nursing continues to expand its global reach. Over the past year, the School has engaged in and strengthened our international collaborations. In this issue, you will also read about the new international connections we've built and how our new Center for Global Nursing and Health director will spearhead these efforts.

As we continue to evolve, we remain focused on our mission to equip our students with the skills needed to lead in a rapidly changing world. We are excited about the future of nursing and the incredible contributions our students and alumni will make as leaders who shape health care for tomorrow.

Together, we are not just preparing nurses—we are developing the leaders who will guide health care toward a brighter future.

EUN-OK IM, PHD, MPH, RN, CNS, FAAN
Dean

The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing
Professor and Laura Lee Blanton Chair in Nursing
Maureen Healy Decherd '73 Distinguished
Professor in Nursing



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“I witnessed the level of her sacrifice when she commuted regularly to Baylor to pursue her doctorate just because she felt UT deserved for its Dean to have the highest level of education.”

– Ms. Luci Baines Johnson

“Whether through quiet acts of kindness or bold steps of leadership, Billye left an imprint on the world of nursing that time will not erase.”

– Dan Dipert

“Billye Brown was a visionary leader.”

– Dean Eun-Ok Im

“Billye Brown has inspired me, first as my dean, and later as my mentor and my friend.”

– Norine Yukon

“Billye always exuded kindness, warmth, compassion and genuine caring”

– Dr. Ferne Kyba

“When we began writing our book together, she requested I call her ‘Billye.’ We became great friends and writing partners.”

– Dr. Barbra Mann Wall

“She had a strong vision for both the profession of nursing and how the School of Nursing, with its unique strengths as part of a public flagship university, could contribute to moving the profession forward.”

– Dr. Alexa Stuijbergen

The Woman Who Built a School: **The Legacy of Billye J. Brown**

Few leaders leave an impact so enduring that their influence is still felt decades after they step down. Dean Emerita Billye J. Brown, EdD, RN, FAAN, was one of those few—her fingerprints are on every degree earned, every research breakthrough and every student who has walked the halls of the School of Nursing.

Brown, who passed away on June 24, 2025—just months shy of her 100th birthday on October 29—left behind a legacy that shaped not only a school but the future of nursing education.

Determined and committed to excellence, she served as the founding dean of the School of Nursing, holding the role from 1972 until her retirement in 1989.

“Billye Brown was a visionary leader whose impact on nursing education continues to shape our profession today,” said Dean Eun-Ok Im, PhD, MPH, RN, CNS, FAAN. “Her commitment to academic excellence, innovation and student success set a standard we still strive to uphold at the School of Nursing. We are proud to carry forward her in her honor.”

A Texas Nurse’s Path to Leadership

Born and raised in Damascus, Arkansas, Brown’s journey into nursing began with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from UT Medical Branch in Galveston, followed by a Master of Science in Nursing from St. Louis University and a Doctor of Education from Baylor University. But her influence would be defined not by degrees but by how she used them to elevate the profession she loved.

Barbra Mann Wall, PhD, BSN ’71, RN, FAAN, and Brown co-authored a book about the history of the School of Nursing titled *Through the Eyes of Nursing*.

“Billye was head of the School of Nursing when I graduated in 1971,” said Wall. “I remember her as Miss Brown, before she obtained her EdD. I didn’t realize that, as she was leading this challenging new program, she was also working on a doctorate, along with many other UT Nursing faculty at the time. When we



Dr. Alexa Stuijbergen, Dean Emerita Billye J. Brown
and Dean Eun-Ok Im.

began writing our book together, she requested I call her ‘Billye.’ We became great friends and writing partners.”

In the 1970s, Brown played a key role in establishing the School of Nursing in Austin and in helping lead the broader University of Texas System School of Nursing (UTSSN). This multi-campus system included nursing schools in Austin, El Paso, Fort Worth, Galveston, San Antonio and Houston. She was appointed as associate dean of the UTSSN in Austin in 1967. Between 1968 and 1973, enrollment in the Austin campus increased by 350 percent.

In 1976, the UTSSN underwent a major restructuring when the Board of Regents voted to decentralize the system, placing each campus under the administration of its nearest health science center or academic institution. According to Wall, the



Dean Emerita Billye J. Brown pictured left, with Jo Eleanor Elliott (middle) and Marion I. Murphy (right) in Washington D.C. during the Capitol Hill celebration of the first National Nurses Day in May 1982. Right, Dean Emerita Billye J. Brown with Ms. Luci Baines Johnson in 1983 and 2018.

decision marked a challenging and emotional transition for faculty across the campuses. They had poured their energy into building a nurse-led system, which Wall described as “Florence Nightingale’s dream: to have nurses leading in health care.” Following the decentralization of the UT System’s multi-campus nursing program, Brown was selected to lead the newly independent School of Nursing at UT Austin.

As dean, she oversaw the development of undergraduate and graduate programs, established a growing research enterprise and launched a continuing education program that extended the School’s impact well beyond campus. She led the launch of the School’s PhD program and the Alternate Entry Nursing Program, which offers a pathway for people with a degree in another field to become nurses. In addition, she established the Alumni Association and Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing chapter and helped secure a permanent home for the School on Red River Street—a facility that signaled the School’s future as a national leader in nursing research and education.

Her tenure saw tremendous growth in enrollment, research and reputation. Her forward-thinking leadership helped position the School as one of the nation’s most respected nursing programs. By the time she retired in 1989, the School was ranked sixth in the nation.

“As the inaugural dean, she had a strong vision for both the profession of nursing and how the School of Nursing, with its unique strengths as part of a public flagship university, could contribute to moving the profession forward,” said former Dean Alexa Stuijbergen, PhD, RN, FAAN, James R. Dougherty Jr. Centennial Professor. “She knew this wouldn’t happen overnight and she addressed her work from multiple perspectives. At the

individual level, she listened, encouraged and challenged nurses to improve their education and then lead and influence others. At the larger structural level, she made a difference through her leadership in national and international nursing organizations. She saw opportunities and was willing to do the slow, painstaking work to support change and improvement.”

Leading Nursing’s Educational Revolution

The School of Nursing was established during a time of historic change in nursing education. Across the country, the model was shifting from hospital-based diploma programs to baccalaureate degrees offered by universities. Brown was at the forefront of this evolution.

According to Wall, the 1963 Surgeon General’s report, *Toward Quality in Nursing*, called for a dramatic expansion of the nursing workforce, including a significant increase in the number of baccalaureate-prepared nurses. Backed by strong political support from President Lyndon B. Johnson and the U.S. Congress, that vision began to materialize with the passage of the Nurse Training Act of 1964, which allocated millions of dollars to strengthen college-based nursing programs.

Brown was part of a pioneering generation of nurses who advocated for baccalaureate education independent of the hospital system. With new federal resources in place, their efforts took root, beginning in Galveston and marking the start of a new, academically-focused era in nursing education.

“Nursing shortages were not new, but what was new was public and private coalitions willing to do something about it,” Wall said.

Brown was one of those doing something.

She was known for her focus on building powerful partnerships. She built strategic coalitions with University leadership, including the president and Frank Erwin, then chair of the Board of Regents, as well as with clinical partners and community leaders.

She was a key figure in the movement to secure federal funding for college-based nursing programs—resources that helped bring her vision for the School of Nursing to life. And her vision extended far beyond the classroom. She hired faculty who would go on to shape the research endeavor of the School, including Dolores Sands, who would later become dean.

Before her retirement, Brown helped establish the School’s first research center—the Center for Health Care Research and Evaluation—laying the groundwork for the thriving research initiatives Texas Nursing is known for today.

A Lifelong Mentor

“For fifty years, Billye Brown has inspired me, first as my dean, and later as my mentor and my friend,” said Norine Yukon, BSN ’78. “Even in the last years of her life, Billye delighted in hearing what I was working on, and she was enthusiastic and generous with her guidance and opinions. Billye Brown made a deep and consequential impact in my life, and her contributions to health care education and nursing empowerment have no doubt rippled throughout the world.”

One of her most enduring alliances was with Luci Baines Johnson, a partnership that continues to have a lasting impact.

Luci Baines Johnson, daughter of President Lyndon B. Johnson and Lady Bird Johnson, has been a longtime friend and generous supporter of the School of Nursing. Her advocacy for the profession and her philanthropic commitment have strengthened the School’s ability to prepare future nurses and advance health care. Through her connection with Dean Emerita Billye J. Brown, Johnson was named an honorary member of Sigma Theta Tau, reflecting her enduring relationship with the School and its mission.

“Billye was my mentor and my friend for 55 years,” Johnson said. “Because of Billye, I got to testify in Congress for nurse practitioner programs, be an honorary member of her beloved Sigma Theta Tau, work for the National League for Nursing and this fall, have the penultimate of honors as an honorary fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

“Everyone who knew Billye knew her blood ran burnt orange,” Johnson continued. “I witnessed the level of her sacrifice when she commuted regularly to Baylor to pursue her doctorate just because she felt UT deserved for its dean to have the highest level of education.”

Whether building relationships across campus or with influential allies, Brown had a unique gift for making others believe in her vision.

Describing her life as blessed with a “Billye trifecta,” Ferne Kyba, PhD, MSN ’76, School of Nursing advisory council member, earned her MSN under the leadership of Billye, later joined the School of Nursing faculty, and ultimately came full circle by serving on the advisory council.

“In each of these roles, Billye served as a valued mentor and guide,” Kyba said. “During those 50 years, she always exuded kindness, warmth, compassion and genuine caring with a keen memory for details about former students, colleagues and events. Her ability to focus just on you and your needs at that moment amazed.”

Her leadership reached far beyond the Forty Acres. Brown served as president of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the Texas Nurses Association and Sigma Theta Tau International. She also contributed as assistant editor of the *Journal of Professional Nursing* and held multiple national leadership roles.

In 1984, she was inducted into the American Academy of Nursing (AAN), and in 2010, she was named an AAN Living Legend—one of the highest honors in the field.

Even after retirement, Brown never stopped giving back. She continued to support the School financially, mentored the next generation of nurse leaders and showed up—again and again—as a guiding presence at School events. Her influence didn’t fade; it deepened.

“Her greatest influence on me personally was seeing how she led and influenced through her connecting with and valuing every person she knew,” Stuijbergen said. “She recognized that each person had different gifts and would contribute in different ways, and after she retired from the dean’s position, she was a master at helping connect alumni and others to opportunities. She valued how our alumni contributed in multiple ways—from excellence in clinical practice to academic leadership at large and small schools of nursing to leadership at the National Institutes of Health. She amazingly never seemed to forget a name no matter how many years it had been.”

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Everyone who knew Billye knew her blood ran burnt orange.

— Ms. Luci Baines Johnson

Vision for the Future

Brown’s contribution to the School of Nursing lives on in the work of the thousands of students, faculty and alumni who carry forward her values of service, education and innovation.

“We all will remember her as the founding dean of the School of Nursing, mentor, friend and philanthropist,” Wall said. “Today, with the leadership from Deans Sands and Stuijbergen—and continuing with Dean Im—the School of Nursing has made huge contributions to nursing and many people throughout the state, nation and world; but Billye’s leadership started it.”

Brown’s family has also felt the impact of her many contributions to nursing.

“Losing my aunt, Billye J. Brown, leaves behind more than just memories—it leaves a legacy,” said Brown’s nephew Dan Dipert. “Billye was a person whose strength, integrity, compassion and mentorship touched everyone she met. Her dedication to family and the School of Nursing was unwavering.

“Whether through quiet acts of kindness or bold steps of leadership, Billye left an imprint on the world of nursing that time will not erase,” he continued. “Her legacy is one of resilience, generosity and love—a powerful reminder that one life, lived with conviction and purpose, can inspire many.”

Her leadership transformed an ambitious idea into a thriving institution, and her influence still resonates through every hallway, classroom and clinic that bears the Texas Nursing name.

Billye J. Brown built more than a school—she built a future.





Galilea Dupree



Taylor Bridges

Shaping the Future:

What it Takes to Equip Tomorrow's Nurse Leaders

Nurse leadership goes beyond managing teams; it shapes the future of health care. Nurse leaders advocate for patients, influence policy, drive innovation and improve systems. They navigate complexity, empower teams and champion positive change. As health care grows more person-centered, the need for skilled, compassionate nurse leaders is greater than ever.

Cultivating nurse leadership is at the heart of the School of Nursing's mission. Through a comprehensive and dynamic curriculum, real-world clinical experiences and strong mentorship, the School of Nursing prepares students to take on leadership roles that extend far beyond the traditional bedside care.

"We believe that leadership starts on day one," said Ana Todd, PhD, RN, clinical associate professor. "At the School of Nursing, we assume our students are future leaders—and we treat them as such."

Todd believes a strong nurse leader is both attuned to their immediate environment and aware of the broader health care system.

This systems-level perspective is essential for effective leadership. Equally important are interpersonal skills—being open to feedback, managing conflict, listening actively and staying engaged in the profession through advocacy or organizational involvement.

One of the ways the School of Nursing prepares students to become future nurse leaders is through its Honors Program.

Led by Todd, the program supports high-achieving students in nursing science and leadership, emphasizing research, critical thinking and professional development to prepare them to lead and innovate in health care.

Honors students collaborate with faculty mentors, pursue hands-on learning and present research at conferences. They receive personalized advising, take specialized coursework and develop leadership skills that strengthen their eligibility for scholarships and professional opportunities.

Combining Clinical Expertise with Business Insight



Myles Johnson's path to nursing is shaped by personal experience and purpose. Inspired by his mother, an ICU nurse and caring for his grandmother with dementia, he pursues a health care reform and innovation minor at UT Austin's McCombs School of Business alongside a BSN in the Nursing Honors

Program—reflecting his dedication to nursing and health care's broader landscape.

His passion for research led him to a project focusing on pain management during childbirth. Johnson's research explores various pain management methods, such as epidurals, nitrous oxide and patient-controlled analgesia pumps, with a focus on patient satisfaction.

"Research is so important in nursing because it allows us to improve practices and enhance patient care," Johnson said. "I've learned how to critically analyze studies and figure out how to apply evidence-based practices in real-life situations."

“Our voices are powerful, It's time for nurses to use them not only for the betterment of our profession but for the betterment of our patients.”

— Tayler Bridges

Johnson’s minor gives him insight into health care administration. He focuses on how evidence-based practice guides clinical decisions and how financial factors, like insurance and billing, affect patient care. By blending nursing with business knowledge, he aims to bridge clinical practice and operational challenges in health care systems.

“I never really saw the connection at first, but my business minor has really opened my eyes to the administrative side of health care,” he added. “I’ve learned about the challenges the health care system faces, like cost and access, and I think it’s important to understand how those things affect patient care.”

Johnson also recently served as president of the ATX Nursing Students’ Association, where he worked to strengthen connections within the nursing student community while also promoting opportunities for leadership development and professional growth.

Developing Leadership Skills Through Coursework and Specialized Programs

At the School of Nursing, students develop leadership skills through hands-on experiences and a strong focus on advocacy. One key opportunity is the oral testimony project, where students research public health issues, receive advocacy training and deliver mock legislative testimonies. Leadership development also includes a required course with professional meeting

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— Dr. Ana Todd

attendance and peer mentorship, with leadership principles woven throughout the curriculum.

The Leadership in Diverse Settings (LeaDS) concentration within the Alternate Entry Master of Science in Nursing (AE-MSN) and MSN programs prepares nurses to lead across health care, education and community settings. The curriculum emphasizes skills in clinical practice, advocacy, resource management, communication and organizational change. Through focused coursework and a capstone project, graduates are equipped to drive innovation and impact in complex health care systems.



LeaDS Program Director Dr. Janice Hernandez prepares LeaDS students to meet with alumni in leadership roles.

The program combines rigorous coursework and real-world experiences to prepare students as nurse leaders, educators and advocates. Capstone projects improve patient care, while partnerships enhance learning and system impact. Leadership develops through classroom learning and clinical practice, where students lead quality improvement projects under faculty and community mentorship, actively applying their skills.

“LeaDS is designed to be a catalyst for long-term career growth, particularly for nurses aspiring to leadership or educational roles,” said LeaDS Program Director Janice Hernandez, DNP, APRN, FNP-C. “By equipping students with advanced skills in project management, systems thinking and change leadership, the program prepares graduates to step confidently into roles such as nurse managers and clinical leaders.”

She emphasized the program’s focus on evidence-based practice, mentorship and teaching strategies that prepare students for nursing education roles. Through hands-on projects, community engagement and leadership development, students gain advocacy and policy experience, opening pathways to careers in public health, nonprofit leadership and health care consulting. The program fosters lifelong learning and prepares graduates to lead and innovate in health care.

“This program is more than a degree—it’s a movement,” Hernandez said. “It equips nurses with the tools, mindset and mentorship to lead transformative change in health care and beyond. And it lives out our University motto: ‘What starts here changes the world.’”

“By equipping students with advanced skills in project management, systems thinking and change leadership, the program prepares graduates to step confidently into roles such as nurse managers and clinical leaders.”

— Dr. Janice Hernandez

A Passion for Research, Leadership and Service



Spring 2025 BSN Honors graduate Galilea Dupree made a strong impact through her research, leadership and service. She contributed to caregiver science research, served as a peer mentor and worked on mindfulness interventions and pediatric epilepsy—experiences that will inform her future nursing practice.

“Research was one of the most rewarding aspects of my education at UT Austin,” Dupree said. “It allowed me to dive deep into topics that I’m passionate about particularly in nursing and mindfulness interventions, and contribute to important conversations within the field.”

In July 2025, Galilea presented her research on Latinx millennial caregivers at the Sigma Theta Tau International Research Congress in Seattle.

Her leadership extended outside the classroom, where she was an active member of “Women in STEM” and contributed to a service project addressing homelessness in Austin.

The “Hydrating the Homeless” initiative, which she helped spearhead, collects, cleans and fills water bottles with community resource pamphlets to distribute to individuals experiencing homelessness.

One of Dupree’s most impactful experiences was participating in Austin’s Point-in-Time count, assessing the housing and resource needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. She said that encountering a person with untreated severe scoliosis and infected wounds left a lasting impression, deepening her empathy and commitment to improving health care access for underserved populations.

Throughout her time in the nursing program, Dupree developed essential skills that will guide her throughout her career.

“As a nurse leader, I champion a future where cultural intelligence and personalized care are not just clinical strategies, but imperatives—empowering us to reimagine healing, elevate patient voices and deliver care that is as various and dynamic as the lives we serve,” she concluded.

Championing Change for Texas Health Care



Hailing from Avery, Texas, a small town in northeast Texas, Tayler Bridges’ journey to UT Austin was made possible by a full-ride scholarship from the Hagan Scholarship Foundation—a testament to her hard work and determination to break the cycle of generational poverty. This December 2024 BSN graduate and new labor and delivery nurse in Austin has quickly become a voice for change in the nursing community. Her passion for patient care and nursing advocacy took root early in her career and has now evolved into a powerful journey of legislative engagement and action.

“It’s empowering to know that we have the ability to make a difference, not just in patient care, but in shaping health care policy,” Bridges said.

She has shared her experience with lawmakers on issues including nurse staffing shortages.

“It was powerful to realize that my voice, even as a new nurse, matters in these conversations,” she said.

Her interest in advocacy began during a public health testimony assignment, where she saw how nurses influence policymakers by sharing knowledge and experiences. Throughout her journey, Bridges has been inspired by mentors from organizations like Texas Nursing Association and the Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses.

“I’ve learned that advocacy is not something you do alone, she added. “It’s about building connections, joining forces, and working toward common goals. Nurses can make a huge difference when we work together.”

Through her efforts, Bridges hopes to inspire other nurses, especially those who are just starting their careers, to become advocates for the changes they want to see in health care.

“Our voices are powerful,” she said. “It’s time for nurses to use them not only for the betterment of our profession but for the betterment of our patients.”





A GLOBAL VISION:
Linda Kim Takes the Lead at the Center for Global Nursing and Health

Linda Kim, PhD, MSN, RN, PHN, CPHQ, CGNC, a seasoned nurse scientist, educator and leader, joined the School of Nursing in May 2025.

With years of experience working in various international settings, Linda Kim, PhD, MSN, RN, PHN, CPHQ, CGNC, new director of the School of Nursing’s Center for Global Nursing and Health, has dedicated her career to improving health care delivery and promoting the well-being of populations around the world. Her work has taken her to several countries, where she has seen both the challenges and the immense potential for positive change in global health.

Studying the Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health

Drawn to UT Austin by its strong commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration and its focus on addressing critical global health issues, Kim was especially inspired by the School of Nursing’s reputation for excellence and the opportunity to lead the CGNH in advancing its mission to tackle some of the most pressing health concerns worldwide.

“What inspired me to take on the role of director of the CGNH was the chance to make a tangible impact on global health through nursing leadership,” Kim said. “I believe nurses are uniquely positioned to drive change at local, national and international levels by empowering communities, advocating for policy changes and building sustainable health care systems. I wanted to be part of an institution that values and supports that potential and UT Austin School of Nursing demonstrates a clear commitment to fostering this kind of leadership.

“The CGNH, in particular, stood out as a platform where I could leverage my experience and expertise to cultivate a new generation of nurse leaders who are prepared to address the complex health challenges facing our world,” she continued. “Leading the CGNH also provides an opportunity to build bridges between research, education and practice, and to foster a culture of innovation that prioritizes global health.”

Kim comes to the School of Nursing with a National Institute of Mental Health-funded R01 study titled “SARS-CoV-2 and Social Determinants of Health Impact on Inflammation Associated Depression Risk (SSIDR).”

This study investigates how repeated COVID-19 infections and social factors drive depression risk through immune-inflammatory changes across diverse populations, including health care workers (HCW).

Building on her previous work at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, this project leverages the rich data and participant cohort from the Emerging Beyond Acquired Risks in Communities study, a collaborative effort led by an interprofessional team at Cedars Sinai.

“My overall program of research focuses on the critical connection between HCW well-being and patient outcomes,” she added. “By understanding and addressing the challenges faced by HCWs, we can create a more supportive and effective health care environment, ultimately leading to better patient outcomes.

“The School’s dedication to global community engagement and addressing the needs of populations makes it an ideal environment for me to expand my work into global settings,” she continued. “Furthermore, the School’s focus on innovative research methods enables me to effectively explore the complex interplay of social factors and population health outcomes. Additionally, UT Austin’s interdisciplinary approach allows me to collaborate with researchers across various fields, enriching our understanding of these complex issues.”

Strengthening Nursing Through Global Partnerships

The Center serves as a central hub for engaging local and international stakeholders in nursing education, fostering collaborations that connect nursing education stakeholders from local communities and around the world.

Through these partnerships, CGNH works to improve health care outcomes, address health disparities and build sustainable solutions for underserved populations.

Since Fall 2024, the School of Nursing has hosted visitors from global regions including Japan, Korea, Scotland and Taiwan.

These international guests have fostered valuable exchanges, providing unique opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing.

The CGNH is dedicated to advancing global health by fostering strategic partnerships with top academic and health care institutions around the world.

Human health and well-being can be profoundly impacted by a multitude of global changes and issues, making global engagement in health care professions, including nursing, essential.

The lessons learned from global collaboration and community activities are mutually beneficial, and the CGNH is at the forefront of facilitating these exchanges.

Programs like the “Engaging Global Health in Costa Rica” education abroad exemplify this commitment, offering students the opportunity to gain firsthand experience with global health systems.

This five-week summer immersion in Costa Rica combines academic coursework with cultural and clinical experiences. Participants enroll in two courses: “Global Health” and “Spanish for Health Care Professionals,” earning six credit hours.

Under the guidance of faculty members Ana Todd, PhD, RN, clinical associate professor, and Nancy Guillet, DNP, MD, MSN, RN, clinical assistant professor, students explore Costa Rica’s universal health care system, known for its emphasis on preventive care and accessibility.

Through site visits to community-based organizations and health care facilities, students gain firsthand insight into the



Students learn critical life-saving skills in the “Engaging Global Health in Costa Rica” education abroad program.

country’s approach to health determinants and outcomes. Living with local host families further enriches the experience, fostering language proficiency and cultural understanding.

This program not only broadens students’ global health perspectives but also equips them with the skills to advocate for equitable health care practices upon their return.

The School of Nursing also has a partnership with Moi University in Kenya, through the Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare consortium.

This collaboration encompasses a range of initiatives, including faculty-led research, student exchanges and joint clinical projects aimed at enhancing health care delivery in both regions.

In July 2023, a team of UT Austin students and faculty traveled to Kenya to work alongside Moi University counterparts on wound care prevention and treatment strategies.

Their efforts included developing locally sourced medical devices, creating educational materials in English and Swahili and conducting qualitative studies on barriers to effective wound care.

Global Growth

Kim will leverage the School’s standing as an international leader in nursing research to strengthen the Center’s impact on global health.

She envisions the CGNH evolving into a dynamic hub of innovation and collaboration in global nursing and health. Her goal is to expand the Center’s reach, enhance its research portfolio and create more opportunities for both students and faculty to engage in impactful global health initiatives.

Under her leadership, the CGNH will prioritize sustainable partnerships and evidence-based interventions that tackle the most pressing global health challenges, with a focus on making a tangible difference in communities across the globe.

“Joining the faculty at the School of Nursing and leading the CGNH is a tremendous opportunity to work with talented colleagues and students who are passionate about making a difference in the world,” Kim concluded. “I am excited to contribute to the School’s legacy of excellence and to help shape the future of global nursing and health.”



Care in Residence School of Nursing Provides Accessible Care for Formerly Unhoused Patients

When leaders from the School of Nursing learned there was a critical need for health care services at a new permanent supportive housing site in Austin for older adults exiting homelessness, they stepped up.

Now, more than a year later, the onsite health clinic at Pecan Gardens, operated by the School of Nursing, has become a cornerstone of care for residents aged 55 and older who are disabled and working to overcome chronic homelessness.

Located in a former hotel converted into 78 fully furnished studio apartments, Pecan Gardens offers more than just a roof overhead. Operated by Family Eldercare with the Austin Housing Finance Corporation, it provides wraparound services—case management, health assessments, independent living skills and an onsite food pantry—to support residents' long-term housing success. Residents connect through the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition and pay no more than 30 percent of their income in rent, with all utilities covered.

By embedding nurse-led health services directly into the housing community, the School of Nursing is helping improve access to care, stability and overall well-being for one of Austin's most vulnerable populations.

Meeting the Need

The clinic eliminates the barrier of transportation, providing direct access to health care within the residence.

Stephanie Lowe, permanent supportive housing program manager for Family Eldercare/Pecan Gardens, said the clinic was created to provide coordinated, comprehensive care through an interdisciplinary team.

By providing on-site care, the clinic bridges access gaps and promotes seamless coordination among providers, case managers and support services for holistic resident health.

"Having the School of Nursing provide a clinic for the residents of Family Eldercare/Pecan Gardens is a significant enhancement to the quality of care and well-being of our community," Lowe added. "This partnership ensures that residents have direct access to essential medical services, fostering improved health outcomes through preventive care, chronic disease management and health education. It also means that residents can receive guidance on medication and treatment management, empowering them to take control of their health with professional support."

Elizabeth Racine, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, a nurse practitioner at Pecan Gardens, says the clinic embodies the School of Nursing's commitment to community care, health equity and hands-on student training, blending nursing practice with social determinants of health.

Integrated Care in a Residential Setting

Unlike other School of Nursing clinics, Racine said Pecan Gardens serves a high-risk, aging residential population, combining health care with supportive services to ensure continuity of care.

The clinic provides residents with primary care, chronic disease management, preventive screenings, medication management, social services and mental health support through Blue Bonnet Community Services, while partnering with Family Eldercare for a comprehensive approach to medical and social needs.

"Working at Pecan Gardens has provided an invaluable experience in primary care, interdisciplinary collaboration and understanding the real-world challenges faced by older previously unhoused adults," Racine added. "One example of the clinic's impact was a patient who struggled with unmanaged diabetes due to transportation barriers. With regular access to care, education and medication management, we were able to stabilize her condition, reducing hospital visits and improving her overall well-being."

Learning Opportunities for All

At the clinic, nursing students gain hands-on experience in assessments, education, care coordination and research, applying classroom knowledge to real-world settings while supporting residents' health and preparing for careers in community and geriatric care.

"The clinic genuinely seems to be making a difference for the patients we serve," said Lucia Collins, a BSN student intern at the clinic. "We have been able to see the same patients over time and build relationships and trust with them. It has been very gratifying to see the improvement in their health and manage-



Elizabeth Racine (seated) consults with a resident at Pecan Gardens.

ment of their conditions. Working at Pecan Gardens has been a great experience for me and a huge benefit to my nursing education."

Lowe shared that the residents have expressed strong appreciation for the clinic and the care provided by the School of Nursing.

Racine said residents value the convenient, personalized care and guidance, feeling more confident in managing their health. Though some request help with paperwork or transportation, overall feedback has been very positive.

"I really love that you have a clinic here," said Jane Turner Roberts, a resident at Pecan Gardens. "It is so convenient, and I don't have to travel. You are so helpful."

Data-Driven Change

Whitney Thurman, PhD '18, RN, assistant professor at the School of Nursing, is studying the health and functional needs of older adults transitioning from chronic

homelessness into permanent supportive housing, funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

About 50 Pecan Gardens residents participate in Thurman's yearlong study tracking health, care use and function. Data collected quarterly show high rates of chronic conditions, including hypertension, diabetes, COPD and mobility impairments.

"One of the things we're seeing is a high level of functional impairment," Thurman said. "Many residents struggle with basic mobility—things like standing up from a chair. Cognitive impairment is another area we're starting to explore more. We suspect it's more prevalent in this population than is currently recognized. The goal is to use this data to inform policies and programs that ensure people don't just get housed but that they can stay housed and thrive."

Additionally, many residents face challenges in adjusting to their new housing due to disrupted routines and the loss of familiar community resources.

"Moving into housing is not a simple fix," Thurman added. "People are still carrying trauma, they're disconnected from their previous support systems, and they have to learn to navigate a completely

different way of living. We often think of housing as the end goal, but in reality, it's just the beginning of another difficult transition."

Lowe shared that Thurman and her team have been a helpful resource and provide crucial support to the residents.

"Through their research and assessments, they not only gathered important data but also identified unexpected barriers that our residents face," Lowe said. "Their insights have helped us better understand the challenges within our community, allowing us to enhance the quality of support services we provide."

While conducting the study, Thurman has found that the residents are eager to participate, often extending interviews beyond their scheduled time.

"Almost everyone we ask wants to participate," Thurman said. "Many of them just want someone to talk to. The surveys are designed to take 15 minutes, but they often turn into hour-long conversations because people have so much to share. I've had participants tell me, 'I just want to help other people who are going through this.'"

Thurman's research aims to inform policies and programs that help older adults maintain stable housing, prevent homelessness recurrence, reduce unnecessary nursing home placements and improve overall quality of life.

Lowe hopes residents will gain confidence and self-sufficiency in managing their health, developing skills for medication management, regular monitoring, and proactive self-care through education and support from the clinic.

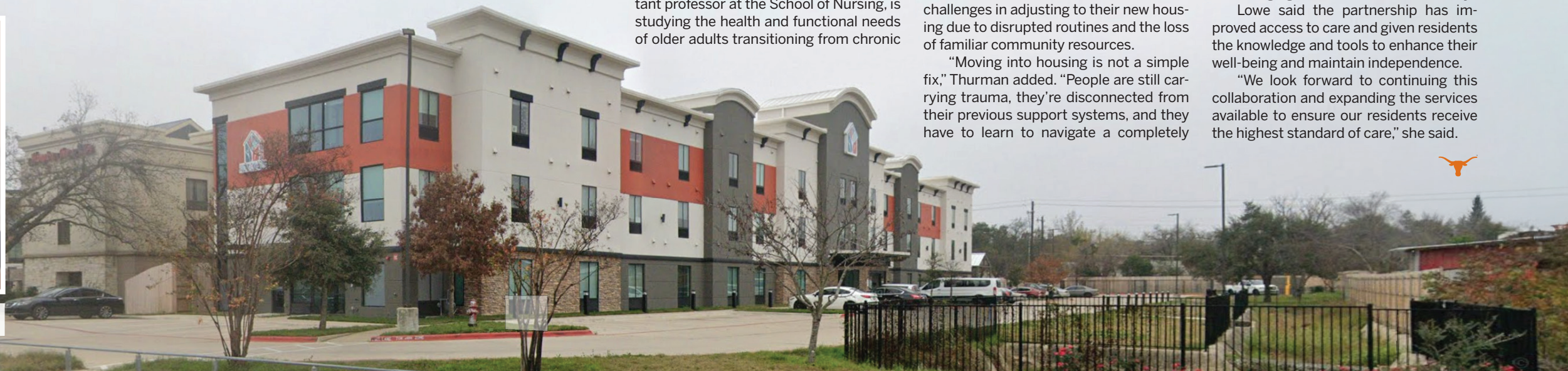
"We are incredibly pleased and grateful to have the School of Nursing providing high-quality, compassionate care to our residents at Pecan Gardens," Lowe said. "Their expertise and dedication to community health have been invaluable in addressing gaps in care, offering essential medical services and educating residents on managing their health more effectively."

Lowe said the partnership has improved access to care and given residents the knowledge and tools to enhance their well-being and maintain independence.

"We look forward to continuing this collaboration and expanding the services available to ensure our residents receive the highest standard of care," she said.



Dr. Whitney Thurman and Elizabeth Racine.



Celebrating the Career of Jane Champion:

Mentorship, Innovation and Compassion

After a remarkable career spanning more than three decades, Professor Emerita Jane Dimmitt Champion, PhD, DNP, MSN, MA, FNP, AH-PMH-CNS, FAAN, FAANP, retired from the School of Nursing in 2025 after 13 years of service, leaving behind an indelible legacy of excellence in teaching, research, clinical practice and global mentorship.

A true master teacher, Champion is known for fostering rigorous, respectful learning environments that inspired generations of nurses and nurse scholars. Her teaching portfolio spans undergraduate, master's and doctoral levels across multiple modalities—face-to-face, hybrid and online.

“Rural health has always been a priority for me. That was initially what drew me into nursing. Nurse practitioners can play and do play a vital role in the provision of health care in these areas.”

— Dr. Jane Champion

Launching nursing programs globally

Throughout her career, Champion was recognized for teaching innovation and program development, having played a central role in establishing doctoral education programs both in the U.S. and internationally.

In Mexico, she collaborated with Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León to develop the country's first doctoral program in nursing, mentoring hundreds of students over two decades. She received an honorary professorship in recognition of her contributions.

In Vietnam, she partnered with Friendship Bridge Nurses and the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Ho Chi Minh City to help establish both bachelor's and master's programs in nursing. Her work emphasized integrating nursing research into academic programs, helping to elevate nursing as a scientific discipline in the region. She also received an honorary professorship there, reflecting nearly 20 years of dedicated collaboration.

DNP leadership

One of Champion's most impactful contributions at the School of Nursing was the development of the School of Nursing's Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program in 2015. As its founding director, she oversaw its launch and growth, guiding it from concept to one of the School's cornerstone programs.

“I was the first faculty member with a DNP at UT Austin,” Champion recalled. “Now, many of our current DNP faculty were once students in the program I helped build.”

Under her leadership, the program emphasized rigorous scholarly projects and fostered a strong culture of publication and presentation. By the time she passed the baton two years ago, students had collectively published over 40 scholarly manuscripts and presented widely at approximately 100 state and national conferences.

“That was probably the most exciting thing I did—the hardest was letting it go,” she said.

Champion is a co-founder of Texas DNP, a statewide organization committed to advancing the impact of DNP-prepared nurses. As past and current president, as well as Board Member, she helped shape the organization's mission to promote leadership, scholarship and policy engagement across Texas.

Recognized for research

In research, Champion is internationally recognized for her contributions to women's and adolescent health, especially among underserved, ethnic minority populations. Her work, centered on sexual health, substance use, interpersonal violence and unintended pregnancy, has informed public health practice and policy across the globe. Over the course of her career, she served as principal or co-investigator on more than 35 federally funded research projects, including 26 grants supported by the National Institutes of Health.



Dr. Jane Champion (seated center) with DNP Cohort 6 in the School of Nursing Courtyard.

Her research began with exploratory studies on sexual health behaviors, eventually evolving into the design and implementation of comprehensive, multilevel interventions aimed at risk reduction and health promotion. One of her most influential projects, Project Image, has been recognized nationally for its effectiveness in promoting healthy sexual behaviors among ethnic minority adolescent women. It was included in both the Centers for Disease Control's Compendium of Evidence-Based HIV Behavioral Interventions and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' list of effective adolescent health interventions in 2014.

Her work has garnered wide dissemination through more than 200 peer-reviewed publications and over 400 professional presentations around the world.

For her significant contributions to nursing science and minority health research, Champion has earned numerous accolades, including her induction into the Sigma Theta Tau International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame in 2018, the Southern Nursing Research Society Award for Research in Minority Health in 2015, and fellowships in both the American Academy of Nursing and the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners.

In addition, she has been honored with numerous accolades that underscore her leadership in research, education and mentorship. She received the Billye J. Brown Award for Excellence in Leadership from the Epsilon Theta Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau Interna-



Former Sigma President Dr. Beth Baldwin Tigges, Dr. Jane Champion and Dr. Liz Madigan at the Sigma Theta Tau International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame in 2018.



Dr. Jane Champion (front row, second from right) with faculty and MSN students from Ho Chi Minh University of Medicine and Pharmacy's School of Nursing.

tional and the Lucie S. Kelly Mentor Award. She was appointed to the editorial board of the Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, and she has held the prestigious Lee and Joseph D. Jamail Endowed Professorship at the School of Nursing since 2015.

As part of The American Nurse Project by Carolyn Jones—a series highlighting stories from more than 100 nurses across diverse specialties—Champion was featured in the segment “Giving Strength to Women in Rural Areas” in 2013. In her interview, she discussed the unique challenges faced by women in rural communities and how nurses play a vital role in empowering them through access to health care, education and community-based support.

Rural health advocacy

Champion's academic accomplishments were deeply rooted in her practice. Growing up in rural Southwest Texas, she developed a strong passion for improving health care access in underserved areas.

“Rural health has always been a priority for me,” she said. “That was initially what drew me into nursing. Nurse practitioners can play—and do play—a vital role in the provision of health care in these areas.”

That early experience influenced both her clinical practice and academic focus. She has long advocated the role of nurse practitioners in meeting primary care needs in rural communities, both as practitioners and through the policies that enable them to serve effectively.

For more than 35 years, she maintained a rural primary care practice in Uvalde, Texas, where she continues to practice today. There, she integrated research, service and culturally responsive care—demonstrating what it means to be a clinician-scholar. Her bilingual and bicultural background, combined with advanced certifications as a family nurse practitioner and clinical nurse specialist in both adult and psychiatric/mental health nursing, uniquely positioned her to serve and advocate for vulnerable populations.

Her interventions, developed and tested in these community-based settings, were translated and implemented internationally, from Mexico and Chile to the United Kingdom. Her work has directly shaped evidence-based, patient-centered models of care for individuals affected by STI/HIV, intimate partner violence and substance use disorders.

Upon retirement, Champion leaves a legacy of inspired learners, international collaboration and a deep, lasting impact on health and humanity.





Verónica García Walker Explores Social Connectedness for Aging Women with Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders

As the population of older adults continues to grow, the unique needs of women aging with schizophrenia spectrum disorders remain largely overlooked. A new study coming out of the School of Nursing is challenging this oversight.

Verónica García Walker, PhD, RN, CNE, clinical associate professor, was awarded an R21 grant from the National Institutes of Health to lead groundbreaking research into the lives of aging women with schizophrenia spectrum disorders in institutional settings.

This study aims to uncover insights into the social connectedness and quality of life of this vulnerable group, providing a critical foundation for future interventions designed to enhance their

well-being. Tracie Harrison, PhD, RN, FAAN, FGSA, associate dean of research at the University of Iowa, is the co-investigator on the project.

The grant funds early-stage, exploratory research with an emphasis on innovative, high-risk studies that can lead to significant discoveries. With limited preliminary data available, the grant enables García Walker to conduct pilot studies and proof-of-concept research.

"I am given the honor of listening to the life course experiences of women who are aging with the diagnosis of schizophrenia spectrum disorders," García Walker said. "In our recent pilot study, many participants shared that this was the first time they felt someone listened to their stories. Since they seemed to enjoy sharing, and I enjoy listening, we are a good combination."

García Walker's research focuses on

“**In our recent pilot study, many participants shared that this was the first time they felt someone listened to their stories. Since they seemed to enjoy sharing, and I enjoy listening, we are a good combination.**

— Dr. Verónica García Walker

the theme of social connectedness—a vital aspect of life for many people, but especially critical for those living in institutional environments.

"We will analyze their input in order to extract themes related to social connectedness that are of importance to them, using Elder's life course theory as a model," she explained. "This allows us to respect their input as co-collaborators in informing future improvements in their care."

García Walker's pilot study has already identified several key issues affecting this population, such as loneliness, lack of social interaction and worries about isolation. These findings will guide interventions to improve their social lives and emotional well-being in institutional settings.

"With the input of adult women aging with the schizophrenia spectrum disorders, we will be able to begin co-development with them of interventions and programs specifically tailored to their situation," she said. "In this way, we will assist the improvement of their experiences of social connectedness as they age in institutions, taking into consideration factors identified in their perceptions of their life course."

What sets García Walker's research apart is its rarity within the field of nursing. Her recent publication in "The Gerontologist" (Walker & Harrison, 2023) was the first documented qualitative study exploring the lives of adults aging with schizophrenia spectrum disorders in institutional settings, she said.

García Walker's research also seeks to address specific health care challenges facing this group. Institutionalized women with schizophrenia spectrum disorders represent a vulnerable and complex population, and addressing their needs is often overshadowed by stigma and marginalization.

While researching this subject, García Walker highlighted the ethical challenges involved in working with this population.

She noted that while some believe conducting studies with institutionalized and vulnerable individuals is unethical, others argue that restricting such research could be discriminatory and hinder advancements in their care. Excluding these individuals from participation decisions may also increase their experiences of stigma and marginalization, she said. Given the complex challenges faced by institutionalized women aging with schizophrenia spectrum disorders, studying their needs is essential for developing effective interventions that improve their health and well-being.



Dr. Verónica García Walker (second from right) goes over patient scheduling with staff at Gracy Woods Skilled Nursing Center. Pictured left to right are social worker Lloyd Weatherspoon, Tonieh Brewer, RN, Director of Nursing, Dr. Verónica García Walker and Heather Devine, Licensed Nursing Facility Administrator.

Her research is not just about studying the participants but about listening to their voices and empowering them to shape the outcomes of the research. García Walker's work is inspired by years of clinical experience, particularly as a psychiatric floor nurse.

"I have often been shocked by the difficulty of many of their lives and their encounters with stigma," she said. "Many of my patients in practice had the diagnosis of schizophrenia spectrum disorders. I wanted to support them as they told their life stories and shared their perceptions of their health care experiences with the world."

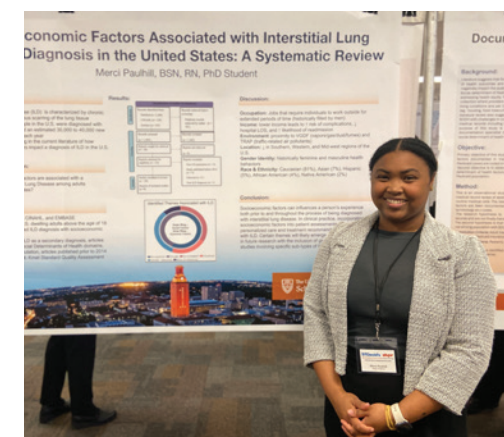
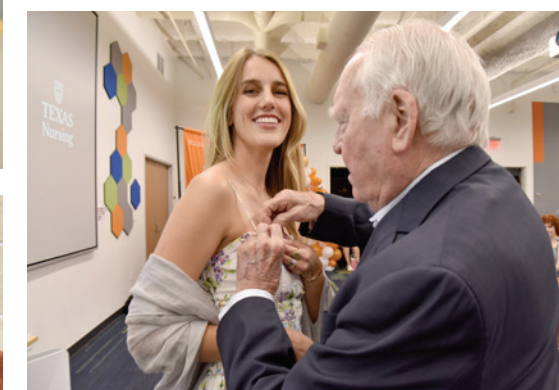
"Veronica's work is innovative and important because she is one of

the few people to have identified this pressing public health need," said Karen Fingerman, PhD, Wilson Regents Professor at the UT College of Liberal Arts, who has served as a mentor to García Walker and offered a grant writing workshop she participated in. "The ability to execute this type of project also relies on fostering an interdisciplinary team with strong outreach into the community." Her research has the potential to make a significant impact on the care and lives of aging women with schizophrenia spectrum disorders. By amplifying their voices and experiences, she hopes to foster greater social connectedness and improve the quality of life for a vulnerable and often overlooked population.





A Year in Photos



Bridging Classroom Learning with Hands-On Experience

The Simulation and Skills Center (SSC) at the School of Nursing is a state-of-the-art facility that provides students with hands-on, realistic learning experiences. Equipped with advanced simulation tools, the Center prepares students to transition confidently from the classroom to clinical practice, ensuring they have the competencies needed for effective patient care.

“Throughout the nursing program, students dive into a variety of simulations,” said Nicole Manley, MSN, RN, CHSE, CA-SANE, director of the Simulation and Skills Center. “These include role-playing exercises, high-fidelity manikin-based simulations, low-fidelity simulations and virtual reality activities. Each type of simulation is crafted to mirror real-life clinical scenarios, helping students sharpen their critical thinking and decision-making skills.”

Building Confidence with Practice

At the heart of the SSC is the simulation lab, where students engage with high-fidelity manikins that mimic real patients, from newborns to adults. These immersive scenarios challenge students to think critically, prioritize patient needs and communicate effectively in a fast-paced clinical setting—all under the guidance of experienced faculty. The lifelike simulations help bridge the gap between theory and practice, allowing students to refine their decision-making skills in a supportive, controlled environment. “Our simulation programming is one

of the key factors that sets our School of Nursing apart,” Manley added. “We offer a wide variety of simulations throughout the program, covering all levels and specialties. This comprehensive approach ensures that students gain hands-on experience in diverse clinical scenarios, preparing them for the complexities of real-world nursing.” Complementing this experience is the skills lab, designed to simulate a hospital ward where students practice essential nursing procedures, such as IV insertion and wound care. This space integrates hands-on training with instructional demonstrations, reinforcing both the technical and clinical reasoning skills required for high-quality patient care. For more advanced assessments, the assessment lab provides a structured classroom setting equipped with exam tables, allowing students to develop their diagnostic and evaluation skills. This space is used for patient assessment practice, orientations and additional simulations that enhance clinical competency. “Simulation is a fantastic way for students to build confidence,” Manley added. “It provides a safe space to practice and make mistakes without risking patient safety. Through repeated practice and feedback, students can refine their

The Simulation and Skills Center
2024-25 academic year.

7,000 appointments made for open lab sessions and video performance exams (VPE).

Peak traffic, Wednesdays
150-200 students

30,000 learner hours per year across various services, including classes, simulations, open lab and VPE.

12,000 unique learner visits annually, with over **650** learners benefiting from the Center's offerings.

On average, each learner visits the Center about **18 times per academic year.**

skills and gain the confidence needed to handle real-world nursing scenarios. Simulations also help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are essential for effective patient care.”

Simulations for Real-World Nursing

School of Nursing faculty play an important role in shaping the simulation experience for students. Working closely with SSC staff, they design and implement realistic and effective simulations that align with key learning objectives. This collaboration includes developing detailed scenarios that mirror real-world clinical situations and providing hands-on guidance during simulation sessions. Supporting this effort are graduate teaching assistants and student assistants, who bring valuable clinical insights and peer perspectives. Graduate assistants offer mentorship and guidance, while student assistants contribute feedback that helps refine programming. Faculty also actively participate in debriefing sessions, helping students reflect on their performance, identify strengths and address areas for improvement. This structured feedback process ensures that students gain the critical thinking and clinical skills necessary for their future nursing careers. The effectiveness of simulations at the SSC is evaluated through a combination of student feedback, performance assessments and academic outcomes. Post-simulation evaluations help gauge students' perceptions of their learning experiences, while team assessments confirm their knowledge and skills. Progress is tracked over time to ensure continuous development. In addition, qualitative feedback from both students and faculty plays a role in refining the simulation program. This ongoing evaluation process allows



Nursing students practice skills and patient interactions in the Simulation and Skills Center.

for continuous improvements, ensuring that simulations remain effective, engaging and aligned with the latest nursing practices. One of the best ways to see this in action is through the success stories of students who have benefited from these hands-on experiences. From mastering critical skills in high-pressure scenarios to gaining the confidence needed for patient care, students consistently demonstrate how simulation training translates into real-world success. Manley said the director of a hospital unit where Texas Nursing students were precepting praised the School's programming for senior students who were part of a patient code blue. The director was impressed with the students' calm demeanor and ability to jump in and help during the code. But it was no coincidence. A few weeks prior, these students had completed a code blue simulation that prepared them for situations just like this.

“I have also had students who return after graduating and share with us experiences as a new nurse that were shaped by simulation activity, or they applied that experience in caring for a patient,” she added.

Innovation in Instruction

The SSC has recently introduced cutting-edge technologies to enhance the learning experience for nursing students. One of the most significant upgrades is the implementation of a new Audio/Visual (A/V) Simulation & Skills Management System. This advanced system enables instructors to capture detailed competencies, bookmark key video segments and provide targeted feedback during student debriefing sessions. By recording and analyzing these sessions, students can track their progress over time and identify areas for improvement, ultimately strengthening their clinical skills.

“I have also had students who return after graduating and share with us experiences as a new nurse that were shaped by simulation activity, or they applied that experience in caring for a patient.”

— Nicole Manley

The new A/V system enhances real-time assessments, allowing instructors to review student performance with greater accuracy and ensure that essential competencies are met.

These advancements also expand the SSC's recording capabilities into the advanced practice health assessment space and two additional classrooms with mobile systems. By capturing a wider range of student activities, the Center can offer an even more immersive and effective learning environment. These innovations are designed to better prepare students for the complexities of real-world nursing, ensuring they enter clinical practice with confidence and proficiency.

Continuing to enhance its learning environment with new technology, SMART Boards have been added to skills rooms, allowing faculty and teaching assistants to visually reinforce key concepts. Instructors can display and annotate videos of skills being performed, providing students with deeper insights and real-time guidance to improve their practice.

Additionally, over the past two years, all SSC spaces have been equipped with new medication machines. These systems replicate those used in hospital settings, giving students hands-on experience in safe medication administration. These upgrades further support student learning, ensuring they develop the confidence and competency needed for clinical practice.

Faculty members leading these initiatives include

Yuri Gamez, MSN, RN, clinical instructor

Larissa Brungot, MSN, RN, clinical assistant professor (VR/AI)

Li-Chen Lin, PhD, RN, CNRN, clinical associate professor, (interdisciplinary education)

Heather Maltsberger, MSN, APRN, NNP-BC, clinical instructor (VR, perinatal scenarios)

Katie Ayers, MS, RN, clinical instructor

Eugene Martir, MSN, RN, CEN, clinical instructor, (scenario development).



Nicole Manley, director, Simulation and Skills Center.

Future-Focused Facility

The SSC is gearing up for exciting advancements to further enhance nursing education. A key focus is expanding virtual reality capabilities and integrating artificial intelligence into patient profile development and scenario building.

During Summer 2025, faculty-led initiatives updated simulations to align with the latest health care practices and protocols.

Additionally, interdisciplinary simulation experiences are being reintroduced, strengthening collaboration with other health care disciplines—an effort that had slowed during the pandemic.

The SSC also expanded learning spaces to accommodate activities such as VR training, patient interviewing and group simulations. These enhancements provide students with more opportunities to develop their clinical and teamwork skills in a setting that reflects real-world health care collaboration. Additionally, the Center is refining its pre-briefing and debriefing processes during Fall 2025 to ensure faculty and students are well-prepared for simulations.

Team-based simulations remain a priority, allowing students to strengthen their communication and teamwork skills in a realistic environment. The capstone course has already integrated advanced team-based simulations, providing invaluable hands-on experience.

To further support students, two

classrooms were renovated during the summer, in large part thanks to funding from the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost. These spaces have been transformed into state-of-the-art learning environments equipped with the latest technology.

A Focused Learning Environment

The SSC is also introducing programs to help students manage stress and improve their mental well-being.

Piloted during the spring and summer of 2025 with students during open lab hours, these programs use immersive VR environments to guide students through mindfulness exercises and meditation practices, providing a unique and effective way to promote relaxation and focus.

“We’ve also introduced music in our open lab spaces,” Manley added. “A few semesters ago, we had teaching assistants who began playing music during open lab sessions, and our students really appreciated it. Those TAs have since graduated, but we have kept the tradition going.”

Manley said the teaching assistants assess the mood of the students during the open lab sessions and choose music—accordingly—opting for calming or ambient tracks. Joshua Thomas, DNP, RN, CNE, clinical assistant professor, introduced music into his skills class as students are practicing.

He was inspired to incorporate mu-



Classrooms on the 4th floor have been transformed with video conferencing technology and repurposed for modular learning.

sic into his classes by one of his former professors, Danica Sumpter, PhD, RN, clinical assistant professor, who played ambient or classical music before class sessions. He notes that recent research supports this practice, showing that music can significantly reduce nursing students’ blood pressure, heart rate and anxiety levels.

“I used music as a way to help introduce myself and my personality to my students and would often take requests from students so they could hear and share their favorite music with their peers,” Thomas said. “Based on my personal observations, students appeared more relaxed and at ease. Additionally, I found that students found me to be more approachable which allowed me to more quickly address their concerns or questions.”

In addition to using music, Thomas leads his lecture classes in box breathing exercises or brief guided meditations before quizzes and exams. He said students have responded positively, sharing

“Experiencing difficult shifts is a part of nursing and knowing how to create a calming and focused environment can be incredibly beneficial.”

– Nicole Manley

that these practices help ease pre-test anxiety and create a calmer learning environment.

“We are always looking for ways to improve the learning environment,” Manley said. “Introducing music not only enhances the current atmosphere but also models for students the environments they may need to create when they go out to practice as nurses. Experiencing difficult shifts is a part of nursing and knowing how to create a calming and focused environment can be incredibly beneficial.”

By offering a comprehensive, hands-on approach to nursing education, the SSC ensures that students graduate with the confidence, skills and critical thinking abilities needed to excel in their profession. Through innovative simulation techniques and a commitment to excellence, the School of Nursing continues to shape the future of patient care.



HONORING LYNN REW:

A GUIDING FORCE FOR NURSING EDUCATION



Even nursing students could use a recess break sometimes, especially one that teaches a lesson.

That's why Lynn Rew sent her class out to the School of Nursing courtyard a few years ago.

"I remember one fall when I was teaching the honors research course, and I had a hard time getting the students interested in research," Rew shared.

So, she made a game out of it.

Rew pinned the name of a research concept they were supposed to have read about that day on the back of their shirt. The students had to ask each other questions to figure out what was on the back of their shirt.

"They were running all over the courtyard chasing each other and laughing, and when they all came back, they had to tell me what theirs was. I had prizes for them, and that was one of the most fun classes, and they loved it."

This was the kind of educator Lynn Rew, EdD, RN, AHN-BC, FAAN, was for more than four decades at the School of Nursing.

She has been a guiding force in nursing education, shaping the next generation of nurses with her passion, scholarship and unwavering commitment to students. She held the title of Denton & Louise Cooley and Family Centennial Professor and was awarded Emerita status upon her retirement in December 2024.

Rew shared that her greatest accomplishments at the School of Nursing were the students she taught who excelled in research and writing.

"It gives you the most incredible opportunity to work closely with students who work on your project," she said. "I have met some of the most amazing people that way, and it's a joy watching them get into it and get excited about

research—that's a real memorable time."

During her tenure, Rew also served as the PhD program director, the director of the Southwest Partnership Center for Nursing Research on Health Disparities, as well as the assistant dean for student affairs and the graduate advisor.

Her career, however, began long before her time at UT Austin, with an academic journey dedicated to understanding and improving the health and well-being of vulnerable youth.

Her research has focused on adolescent health behaviors, mental health and resilience.

Rew's passion for nursing education was sparked during her early years as a bedside nurse.

"I was always interested in the teaching aspect of bedside nursing as a new graduate nurse," she explained. "After about five years of practice, I decided to tiptoe into graduate school and see

what else I could do. There, I really fell in love with what I saw professors' lives and practices were like. I also had a favorite aunt who was a teacher, and I internalized a lot of her enthusiasm as I grew up."

Her career has been distinguished by numerous prestigious awards and honors, reflecting her significant contributions to nursing education, research and mentorship. Some of her notable accolades include being inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame in 2019 and being named a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing in 1991. She also received multiple Dean's Excellence Awards in research, writing and teaching. Rew's impact extends beyond her own work; she has mentored multiple nursing scholars, including a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Nurse Faculty Scholar mentee, and has earned recognition as a top educator, including receiving the 2020 Outstanding Graduate Teacher Award at UT Austin.

In addition to her honors, Rew's research has made a significant impact, particularly in areas related to adolescent health, homelessness and sexual health.

She has been the principal investigator on multiple National Institutes of Health-funded studies, including a \$2.7 million project on promoting responsible health behaviors in homeless youth.

Her research also includes exploring the health-risk behaviors of youth, genetic testing in adolescents and examining the role of companion animals in Mexican-American populations.

Her work has been supported by numerous grants, such as those from the National Institute of Health, including the National Institute of Nursing Research, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, as well as the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities.



Dr. Lorraine Walker, Dr. Lynn Rew and former Dean Dolores Sands in 2003.

“I’ve seen all of the aspects of nursing taught in the School are very strongly rooted in research. That has become more apparent and stronger over the years.”

— Dr. Lynn Rew

"I used to tell my doctoral students at the beginning of the semester that when I finished my dissertation, I was never going to do research again," Rew shared. "But then I started working at a doctoral level and would find myself looking for journals and books and realized that I didn't know enough, and my love of learning came out of that. I wanted to keep seeking answers."

Her leadership within the nursing community has left an indelible mark, reinforcing the importance of evidence-based practice and compassionate care.

Before joining the faculty at the School of Nursing, Rew was one of the founding members of the American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA), established in response to the challenges nurses faced in the 1970s. On January 17, 1981, 33 nurses from eight states gathered in Houston to establish AHNA, united by a shared vision of a health care system that values and nurtures its caregivers.

Since co-founding AHNA, Rew has served on the Association's research committee, received a research grant, earned multiple certifications and was recognized as a Holistic Nurse Champion through the Integrative Healing Arts Program in Holistic Nursing in 2019. She also served as editor of the Journal of Holistic Nursing and was the inaugural chair for the American Holistic Nurses' Certification Corporation.

During her tenure, Rew witnessed the evolution of both the nursing field and the School of Nursing, including the growth of advanced practice programs that elevated nursing and the School.

"I've seen all of the aspects of nurs-

ing taught in the School are very strongly rooted in research," she said. "That has become more apparent and stronger over the years. When I first came here, there wasn't an associate dean of research or the Cain Center for Nursing Research."

The School of Nursing now has an associate dean of research and the Cain Center for Nursing Research, which was established in 1995 to support and advance nursing science.

"Nursing should be based on research," Rew continued. "Dean Im is a very strong researcher herself, and that is part of her vision for the School and to be well-known for that."

Rew's influence will continue through the students she has taught, the research she has conducted and the legacy she leaves behind at the School of Nursing, including through the Rew Family Graduate Research Endowment in Nursing and the Rew Family Professorship in Nursing.

The graduate research endowment supports doctoral students conducting dissertation research focused on adolescent or child health, with priority given to those studying adolescent health. Recipients of this prestigious support are recognized as Rew Family Graduate Fellows. Meanwhile, the Rew Family Professorship will fund the University's standard criteria for endowed professorships, providing funding for the holder's academic and research activities. This includes support for University centers, programs and research initiatives overseen or actively participated in by the professorship holder. Both endowments demonstrate Rew's dedication to advancing nursing education and research for future generations.

"Stay tuned, I haven't gone away yet," she concluded.



Empowering Nurses for Impact: A Look into the DNP Program

Designed for experienced nurses seeking to elevate their practice, the post-MSN Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program, established at the School of Nursing in 2015, equips students with the skills to translate evidence-based research into real-world health care solutions.

With a curriculum that emphasizes leadership, quality improvement and health policy, the School of Nursing's DNP program prepares nurse leaders to drive meaningful change in patient care and health care systems.

According to DNP Director Stephanie Key, DNP, APRN, CPNP-PC, the vision and mission of the program is to provide a terminal degree for advanced nurses in areas of leadership, clinical expertise and improving patient outcomes at a system level.

"One factor that makes us different is that we are a hybrid program, and so students get to know faculty and their advisors on an individual basis with our face-to-face, on-campus intensives," Key said. "Our program focuses on mentorship and individualized areas to advance clinical leadership in specialization within a student's interest area."

Preparing to Lead

For DNP student Jennifer Barnes, MSN, FNP-C, pursuing this degree has been a long-held personal goal, driven by her commitment to continually evolve and grow as a nurse.

"The DNP program has expanded my understanding of the numerous opportunities to enhance our health care system," Barnes said. "Whether focusing on rural, underserved populations, large metropolitan health care systems, community health quality improvement initiatives or academic leadership and research, there are countless possibilities for a DNP-prepared individual."

Barnes' personal mission is to improve the delivery and management of care for women in the menopausal transition. Through the DNP program, she has been equipped to identify gaps in care and develop her scholarly project—a requirement of the program—which she plans to publish in an academic journal. Her work aims to contribute to advancing care and research in this critical area of women's health.

The DNP program's objectives emphasize integrating nursing science with ethical, biophysical and organizational principles to enhance patient-centered care and health outcomes. The program fosters evidence-based practice, policy implementation and nursing scholarship while promoting quality and safety initiatives. Students develop expertise in interpro-

“One factor that makes us different is that we are a hybrid program, and so students get to know faculty and their advisors on an individual basis with our face-to-face, on-campus intensives. Our program focuses on mentorship and individualized areas to advance clinical leadership in specialization within a student's interest area.”

— Dr. Stephanie Key

fessional collaboration, systems-based problem-solving, informatics and health care technology. Additionally, the program nurtures professionalism, leadership and lifelong learning, ensuring graduates are well-prepared to drive innovation and excellence in advanced nursing practice.

Growing to Meet Demand

Starting in 2026, all of the School of Nursing's advanced practice programs will transition to DNP programs. This change addresses the growing demand for nurses to practice at the highest level and meet the increasing complexity of patient care. As part of this transition, clinical hours will be increased, providing students with more hands-on experiences.

"We have people from a variety of backgrounds coming to UT, and the discussions become much richer when practitioners, administrators and educators come together to talk about problems and figure out how we can all collaborate to find solutions," Key added.

The program continues to draw passionate professionals dedicated to advancing the nursing profession.

Enrollment in the DNP program has surged, with applications rising significantly. From 2024 to 2025, enrollment increased by an impressive 63 percent.

"Being in a classroom full of colleagues who are passionate and driven to innovate and change health care in different ways is an incredible experience," Barnes added. "When combined with the expertise of the DNP faculty and the support of mentors, the result is both highly stimulating and inspiring to be a part of."

Barnes highlighted that the program prioritizes the dissemination of research findings and best practices to improve patient outcomes. By bridging the gap between evidence-based research and clinical practice, the program ensures that advanced nursing knowledge translates into real-world impact.

Key strategies for achieving this include publishing in peer-reviewed journals, presenting at professional conferences, engaging in community education and shaping health policy at local, state and national levels.

Nurses Driving Change

As the nation's largest health care profession, nurses are well positioned to shape health policy at every level.

According to Barnes, nurses can engage at multiple levels to share information and experience in nursing with policymakers.

"As future nurse leaders, we must advocate and grasp our role in health policy development," Barnes said. "Understanding state and federal legislative processes will help position stronger nurse leaders to engage with state representatives effectively."

In March 2025, Barnes attended the American Association of Colleges of Nursing Student Policy Summit, a two-day conference in Washington, D.C., designed for nursing students from AACN member institutions. The summit centers on the federal policy process and the role of nursing advocacy in shaping health care.

"Each nurse, as a representative of the patient populations they serve daily, holds the potential to advocate for policy reform within their communities and organizations," Barnes said. "A comprehensive understanding of the legislative process, along with active participation in local and state nursing organizations, is crucial for addressing practice gaps at all levels."

Barnes said she has made it her mission to learn how to drive meaningful change within her community, as well as at the state and national levels. By building on the objectives of the DNP program, she aims to become a more effective change agent and leader. Additionally, she plans to connect with like-minded student leaders to deepen her understanding of how she can influence health policy.

Key highlighted that some students have successfully changed the culture within organizations by advocating for policy shifts and offering valuable support.

"Our graduates have the confidence to serve on boards, be a voice for the nursing profession and advocate for better health care outcomes for communities and populations," Key concluded.

Jennifer Barnes at the
AACN Policy Summit



Kelly Pretorius' Journey in Pediatric Safety, Global Nursing and Policy Advocacy

Kelly Pretorius, PhD '19, MPH, APRN, CPNP-A/C & P/C, BSN '07, RN, clinical assistant professor, has come full circle. In 2024, she returned to the School of Nursing, where she once studied, as a faculty member dedicated to advancing pediatric safety, global health initiatives and policy advocacy. A passionate advocate for child health and well-being, Pretorius brings a wealth of experience from her research, international work and policy involvement to shape the next generation of Long-horn nurses.

Pretorius' journey in nursing began at the School of Nursing, where she completed her BSN in 2007 and later returned in 2017 as a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Future of Nursing Scholar, earning her PhD in 2019. During her doctoral studies, she was also a fellow at the Center for Health Communication—a collaboration between Dell Medical School and the Moody College of Communication. She continued her academic journey with postdoctoral studies at Indiana University in 2023–24, funded by the National Institute of Nursing Research.

Her research has centered on improving safety measures for pediatric patients, with a focus on preventing hospital-related adverse events and enhancing family-centered care. Her program of research specifically focuses on pediatric injury prevention, developing interventions through tailored messaging to influence parenting practices. She aims to enable parents to engage in behaviors that prevent leading causes of pediatric morbidity and mortality.

"I've seen firsthand the consequences of preventable injuries since I've been working as a front-line provider/pediatric nurse practitioner since 2010," Pretorius said. "I'd say that my passion has slowly shifted to how I can better support families, however, because I realize we can only improve safety and injury prevention for children via their parents and caregivers' actions."

One of her first publications, during her doctoral studies at the School of Nursing, became a major milestone in her career, cited over 80 times. Her

study, "An Integrative Review: Understanding Parental Use of Social Media to Influence Infant and Child Health," was the first-known review to examine how parents utilize social media to obtain information about parenting or infant health. This led to her interest in social media analyses, specifically regarding safe sleep practices. Her subsequent Twitter and Facebook studies on the prevention of sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) have influenced both national and international experts in the field.

Notably, Pretorius' research was cited by the American Academy of Pediatrics in its 2022 Updated Recommendations for Safe Infant Sleep, specifically the recommendation that media and manufacturers follow safe sleep guidelines, as social media impacts social norms.

In January 2024, she was selected as one of five Emergency Medical Services for Children scholars through the Pediatric Pandemic Network, making her the only nurse scholar currently in the program. This national mentorship opportunity has allowed her to showcase the abilities of a PhD-prepared nurse, leading to her recent success in securing a \$100,000 pilot grant from the Pediatric Pandemic Network. This grant will fund her mixed-methods study on parental safety practices, which will take place at Texas Children's Hospital in Austin, where she also practices as a pediatric nurse practitioner.

"My social media analyses on varying injury prevention topics direct future research by identifying what parents/caregivers are discussing—what's important to them—and using more effective language when developing public health initiatives," she shared. "My current study will hopefully inform future intervention studies to assist parents/caregivers in developing and/or modifying their safety practices to prevent some of the leading

causes of pediatric injury and death."

She has presented her research at the Cribs for Kids conference, the Global Injury Prevention Showcase and the International Society for the Study and Prevention of Perinatal and Infant Death conference. She continues to serve as a subject matter expert for the Austin Public Health Task Force for Safe Sleep. In February 2025, Pretorius was honored with the Early Science Investigator Award from the Southern Nursing Research Society, recognizing her contributions to the field early in her career.

Improving Global Health Through Nursing Leadership

Beyond her research, Pretorius has dedicated much of her career to international health initiatives. She spent nearly four years in Japan, where she volunteered with the Red Cross at the Naval Hospital Okinawa as a pediatric nurse practitioner and worked for a local university. In 2021, she was invited to give a guest lecture at a Japanese School of Nursing, further fostering relationships with the Japanese community. In addition, she helped establish a health care advocacy organization in Okinawa aimed at improving health care access for both active-duty military personnel and Americans stationed abroad. Her extensive volunteer work led to investigations by the Inspector General and Government Accountability Office, as well as funding through the National Defense Authorization Act to evaluate health care challenges in Japan.

Her advocacy efforts included engaging with legislators, including the Senate Armed Forces Committee and serving as a subject matter expert for the "Hire Oki Spouses" project, which addressed the employment challenges faced by health care professionals, particularly nurses, stationed overseas.

"Living in Japan for nearly four years and after personally experiencing their health care system—especially their maternal health care—broadened my perspective even further," she continued. "I do not assume I understand someone's experiences but strive to engage with communities to learn."

Pretorius is deeply passionate about health policy and has contributed to legislative changes that enhance pediatric health care and nursing practice. She was selected as a National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners advoca-

cy scholar and has published a review on the perinatal mental health of active-duty spouses, calling for policy changes and highlighting nursing's role in addressing this issue.

"As I continue in this area of research, I realize that policy is the most important aspect of improving pediatric safety, which is why I've gotten more involved in health care policy," she said. "Nursing is uniquely qualified to lead this initiative because we care for people holistically and recognize that behavior is influenced by multiple factors. We are flexible, creative and are up to the challenge of working with and among communities to address some of these really complex issues and challenges."

Inspiring Future Nurse Leaders

Now, as a faculty member at the School of Nursing, Pretorius inspires students to think beyond traditional nursing roles and consider the broader impact they can have—whether through research, advocacy, global health initiatives or policy reform. She mentors nursing students, emphasizing the importance of evidence-based practice and encouraging them to explore innovative solutions to health care challenges.

"I hope to educate nursing students and professionals on the importance of health care policy," she added. "I encourage nurses to get involved in health care policy and to create a seat at the table. Incremental change is still change; we still have a lot of work to do in the realm of pediatric health care and injury prevention."

Her journey from student to faculty member exemplifies the strength of the Texas Nursing community and the profound influence alumni can have in the field. With her deep commitment to pediatric safety, international health and policy advocacy, Pretorius continues to be a leader in nursing, ensuring that children worldwide receive the highest standard of care.

"Nursing is such a beautiful profession that allows us to serve others in various ways; although we may have different paths, we will always impact people's lives," she concluded. "Engaging in meaningful research and informing policy allows us to achieve a wider impact. I hope to expose my students to a world of possibilities when they envision their future and hope to foster their professional growth however I can."



“I hope to educate nursing students and professionals on the importance of health care policy.”

— Dr. Kelly Pretorius



Ms. Luci Baines Johnson: A Lifelong Champion for Nursing and Gerontological Care

A devoted friend and generous supporter of the School of Nursing, philanthropist and businesswoman Luci Baines Johnson has long been a dedicated advocate for nursing, health care and the well-being of older adults.

Her commitment to advancing the nursing profession, particularly in gerontological nursing, has earned her widespread respect and, most recently, recognition as an Honorary Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing (FAAN) in 2025.

When asked what it means to her to be honored by the AAN, Johnson's answer was "simply everything."

"Since I was a student nurse at Georgetown University 65 years ago, I have devoted much of my life to the advancement of nursing education," she added. "And in return, nursing has given me the greatest gift of all: a purpose-driven life."

Johnson has made significant contributions to the field of nursing, including participating in the accreditation of baccalaureate and master's programs through her service on the National League of Nursing's Board of Review. She has also advocated for the National League for Nursing before the U.S. Congress.

Thanks to the School of Nursing's inaugural Dean Emerita Billye J. Brown, Johnson was named an honorary member of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing. She has served on the Advisory Councils of the UT Austin School of

Nursing and Georgetown University, helping to raise funds for professorships, scholarships and lectureships, and providing major support for gerontologic and geriatric nursing programs at both institutions.

"Luci Baines Johnson's lifelong dedication to advocating for improving health and well-being in our communities exemplifies the very spirit of nursing leadership," said UT Austin School of Nursing Dean Eun-Ok Im, PhD, MPH, RN, CNS, FAAN. "Her deep ties to public service and her unwavering support for the nursing profession make her an inspiring and most deserving recipient of this prestigious honor."

This recognition celebrates her impactful contributions to nursing education, advocacy and philanthropy.

"I was privileged to work closely with Luci Baines Johnson during my time as dean of the School of Nursing," said Alexa Stuijbergen, PhD, RN, FAAN, James R. Dougherty Jr. Centennial Professor in Nursing, who served as dean from 2010 to 2023. "As a renowned and respected community leader, Luci has always been an enthusiastic and effective supporter of nursing at the local, state and national level. Her leadership, advocacy and financial support have impacted the lives of countless individual students and faculty, as well as systems of care and federal support for nursing education. I was honored to work with a fellow UT Austin alumnus, Dr. Ken Dion, to nominate her as an Honorary FAAN."

“Luci Baines Johnson’s life-long dedication to advocating for improving health and well-being in our communities exemplifies the very spirit of nursing leadership.”

– Dean Eun-Ok Im

A Lifelong Connection to Nursing

Johnson, daughter of President Lyndon B. Johnson and Lady Bird Johnson, has a connection to nursing as personal as it is profound. In 1964, she enrolled in the School of Nursing at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., driven by a deep desire to enter the profession. But after two semesters, an engagement to her boyfriend presented an unexpected dilemma. At the time, Georgetown, like many universities, particularly nursing schools, had policies prohibiting married students from continuing their education. Faced with the choice to stay in school or get married, she chose the latter. She settled in Austin with her family and continued her passion for nursing and commitment to supporting the profession.

Advocacy Rooted in History

Johnson's advocacy for nursing dates back decades.

In the 1970s, UT System Chancellor Harry H. Ransom recognized her deep interest in nursing and invited her to join the Advisory Council for what was then known as the UT System School of Nursing, and later, the UT Austin School of Nursing.

Her commitment to advancing the profession continued through her service as a trustee on hospital boards, including MD Anderson Cancer Center, and her involvement with numerous community organizations.

In the 1970s, Billye J. Brown, then dean of the School of Nursing, played a pivotal role in mentoring Johnson, helping her cultivate the skills to champion professional nursing education in the legislative arena.

In 1986, at the request of nursing leaders, Johnson testified before the U.S. Congress to advocate for continued funding of nursing education and research amid growing federal budget cuts. Her compelling testimony underscored the vital role nurses play in improving maternal and child health outcomes and cautioned against reducing investments in nursing education and research. Her efforts helped strengthen support for the National Institute for Nursing Research at the National Institutes of Health, establishing nursing research as a key pillar of national health innovation.

Motivated by a deep concern for the critical shortage of nurses and nursing educators, Johnson served as Honorary

Chair of Nurses for a Healthier Tomorrow—a coalition of 43 health care organizations dedicated to promoting the nursing profession through a national outreach campaign.

In recognition of her enduring commitment to the nursing profession, Johnson has received numerous prestigious honors over the years. In 1985, she became one of the first “non-nurses” to be inducted as an Honorary Member of Sigma Theta Tau, the international nursing honor society, in acknowledgment of her significant contributions through advocacy, policy and philanthropy. She was later awarded Sigma’s highest honor, the Archon Award, in 2022. Further cementing her legacy, Georgetown University awarded her an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters in 2018, celebrating her lifelong dedication to advancing health care and nursing education.

Philanthropy and the Power of Giving

In May 2020, during National Nurses Week and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Johnson and her second husband, Ian J. Turpin, made a transformative gift to the School of Nursing.

This gift, dedicated to the memories of Lady Bird Johnson and Margaretta Turpin—Ian’s mother, a World War II Army Nurse—aimed to support gerontological nursing education and care for older adults, particularly those impacted by the pandemic.

The funds have been used to provide scholarships for nursing students specializing in gerontology, support critical aging initiatives, strengthen clinical programs serving older adults and address emergency needs related to the pandemic. This gift was a timely and meaningful investment in nursing’s ability to care for one of the most vulnerable populations during a critical moment in health care history.

The Johnson-Turpin Center for Gerontological Nursing

Building on this legacy, the Luci Baines Johnson and Ian J. Turpin Center for Gerontological Nursing was established at the School of Nursing in 2022. The Center serves as a hub for excellence in gerontological nursing education, research and practice. Its mission is to lead innovative community-based and clinical research focused on improving health, independence and quality of life for diverse aging adults and their caregivers. The Center also mentors future nursing leaders and disseminates knowledge to advance gerontological nursing locally and globally.

Honoring a Legacy, Inspiring the Future

Johnson's recognition as an honorary Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing is a testament to her lifelong dedication to nursing advocacy, education and philanthropy. By supporting the next generation of nursing professionals and advancing research in gerontology, she honors countless nurses who transform lives every day.

As the nursing profession faces the challenges of a growing aging population, leaders like Johnson remind us that advocacy, compassion and investment in education remain the keys to healthier communities and brighter futures.

"For those who love the nursing profession, there could be no greater honor than to be inducted into the American Academy of Nursing," Johnson said.



Supporting the Next Generation of Nurses



Sharon (Leyland) Ahrari
MSN '93, RN

For Sharon (Leyland) Ahrari, MSN '93, RN, the dream of becoming a nurse began as a child in her grandparents' home in San Antonio.

"I borrowed my grandmother's long white half-slip, a white blouse from Catholic school and a large white dinner napkin folded into a triangle on which, I drew a cross with a red crayon, pinned the napkin into my hair with bobby pins, and thus began my nursing career."

Though the dream started early, it wasn't until the age of 30 that Ahrari formally pursued nursing. She began a career in Washington, D.C., working as a CS-3 clerk-stenographer with Immigration & Naturalization Service and later for the D.C. Department of Corrections, where she served for 11 years. She left her GS-9 position to pursue a nursing degree at The Catholic University of America, which led to her commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force Nurse Corps. She went on to serve for 24 years, retiring as a lieutenant colonel.

"Not only am I very proud of my 24-year Air Force nursing career, but my mantra has always been 'to make life a little easier for someone else,' and being able to help future nurses in this way also gives me great pride and a way to

live up to my life-long mantra," she said.

Ahrari's decades of service in military and clinical settings gave her a deep appreciation for the impact nurses have across every stage of care—and the support it takes to train them. Inspired by the educational opportunities that shaped her own journey, she felt called to give back in a meaningful way. That desire to make a lasting difference led her to invest in the next generation of nurses at the School of Nursing.

She received financial support for both her undergraduate and graduate nursing education through federal and military programs, which allowed her to pursue her degrees without acquiring significant debt.

"I believe that these two opportunities to attend school without incurring an overwhelming financial burden heavily influence the reason that I would like to provide a similar opportunity for others."

Her generosity has taken the form of the Sharon Leyland Ahrari Endowed Scholarship at the School of Nursing, established through UT's Texas Challenge matching program. The University's Texas Challenge program will match the initial endowment dollar for dollar.

"Through this gift-matching program, I will be able to double my ability to help high-potential nursing students

from middle- and low-income families," she added.

Ahrari's giving aligns closely with the School of Nursing's mission, particularly in areas like student recruitment and retention, securing financial support and strengthening connections with the community and alumni.

One contingency, Ahrari said, is for nursing students to be able to put the funds toward their clinicals or to support them in the simulation and skills labs, if they are required to pay for these out of pocket.

"Having had a 24-year nursing career, and the fact that my late husband Ehsan and I never had children, I have decided that financing the education of family and others would be my legacy," she said. "After setting up educational Invest 529 accounts for ten of my nieces and nephews, I want to leave most of the rest of my assets to the School of Nursing to provide educational opportunities for those who may not be able to afford nursing education otherwise."

Ahrari's journey in nursing reflects a lifelong commitment to service, compassion and education. Through her endowed scholarship efforts and a belief in the core values of nursing, she ensures that the legacy of compassionate, well-prepared patient care endures.



Investing in the Future of Pediatric Nursing: The Christy and David Dauphin Graduate Fellowship in Nursing

For Christy and David Dauphin, giving back to the School of Nursing is more than a personal mission—it's a way to help shape the future of nursing. Through the Christy and David Dauphin Graduate Fellowship in Nursing, the couple supports graduate students who are focused on pediatrics, have financial need and are graduates of a Texas high school.

Christy Dauphin, BSN '75, RN, knew early on that she wanted to be a nurse.

"I decided on a career in nursing before college," she said. "I had family members who were nurses, and they encouraged me to get my degree in nursing."

That decision led her to the School of Nursing, where she found not only an exceptional education but also the inspiration to give back.

"The School of Nursing gave me the preparation I needed for my work in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and pediatrics," she said. "I had great professors who were very inspiring and dedicated to their students. This motivated me to want to give back to our future students."

Over the course of her career, Christy worked in NICUs and pediatric settings across hospitals, clinics and schools. Her dedication to children and families inspired the fellowship she and her husband would later endow.

"There is such a demand for

nurses, now and in the future, to help meet the health care needs of children and their families," Christy said. "Everyone will need a nurse at some time in their life, so it is important to support the students who will be taking care of all of us in the years to come."

The Christy and David Dauphin Graduate Fellowship in Nursing helps to ease the financial burden for graduate students, many of whom are juggling multiple roles.

"I have heard from many fellowship recipients," she

added. "Most are not only pursuing their advanced degree, but they are working, volunteering and raising a family. These accomplished future nursing leaders and researchers are making an amazing difference in health care already. They need our support. They are the future of nursing."

In addition to their philanthropy, the Dauphins remain deeply involved in the UT Austin community. Christy currently serves on the School of Nursing Advisory Council and the Chancellor's Council Executive Committee. She has also served on the board of St. James House for the Diocese of Texas and the visitors board for Scott and White Hospital in Marble Falls.

Through their fellowship, the Dauphins are not only honoring Christy's legacy but also paving the way for a new generation of pediatric nursing professionals to lead with knowledge, compassion and purpose.

— Christy Dauphin



"There is such a demand for nurses, now and in the future, to help meet the health care needs of children and their families. Everyone will need a nurse at some time in their life, so it is important to support the students who will be taking care of all of us in the years to come."

WHAT STARTS HERE

STARTS WITH YOU

The Final Year of the What Starts Here Campaign

As the School of Nursing enters the final year of the University's What Starts Here 10-year fundraising campaign, the School reflects on the profound impact this initiative has had on the future of nursing education, research and health care. This campaign has been a catalyst for shaping the next generation of compassionate, skilled and visionary nurses who will lead the charge in person-centered care and health system innovation.

The What Starts Here campaign was designed to invest in the future of nursing by providing essential resources that will support the education, research and development of future nursing leaders. By focusing on scholarships, faculty excellence, experiential learning and community-based health solutions, this campaign is not only transforming nursing education but also helping to create lasting changes in health care delivery.

Throughout the What Starts Here Campaign, the School of Nursing has made substantial progress in its mission to support and develop the next generation of nursing professionals. Thanks to the generosity of alumni and friends, the campaign has raised critical funds that have already made a significant impact in several key areas:

Scholarships and Success Programs:

Scholarships remain a key priority for the campaign. They help ensure that nursing students have access to a world-class education.

Faculty Excellence:

The success of the School of Nursing is rooted in the strength of its faculty. To maintain its leadership in nursing education and research, the campaign has invested in recruitment and retention packages for excellent faculty members, including endowed chairs, professorships and graduate fellowships. This support allows faculty to continue their research and innovative teaching.

Experiential Learning Opportunities:

Through the campaign, the School of Nursing has expanded opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience in the classroom, simulation labs and clinical settings. These experiences are essential for preparing the next generation of nurses to thrive in real-world health care environments.

Community-based Health Solutions:

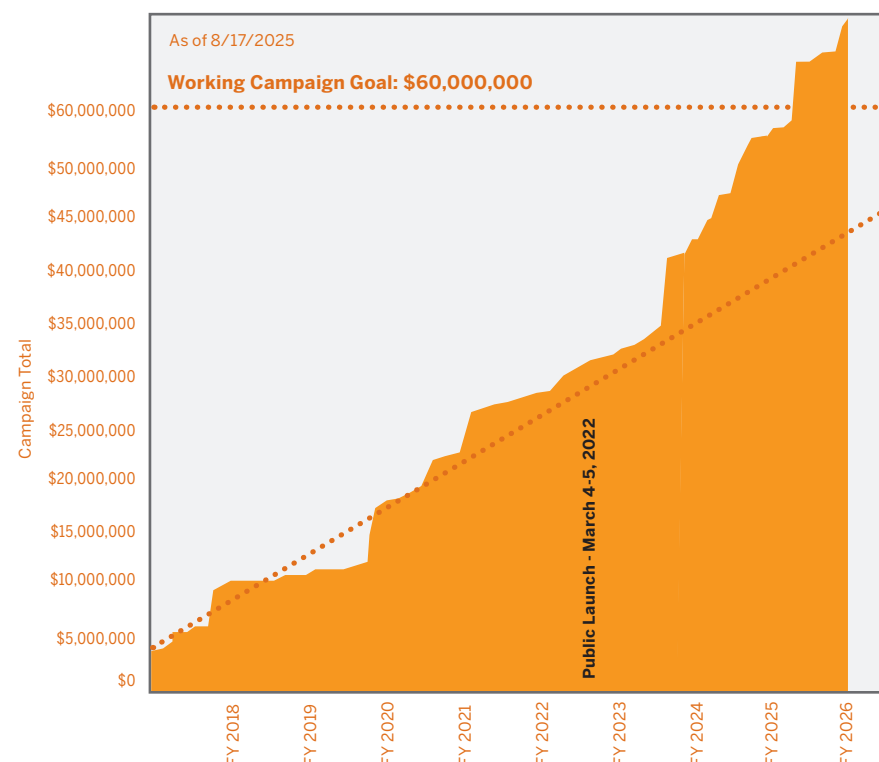
As the country faces an urgent need for innovative, coordinated care systems for older adults, the School of Nursing is reimagining community-based approaches that prioritize health, independence and aging. Strategic investments in endowed chairs and professorships will attract and retain top faculty dedicated to this mission, while seed funding for pilot projects will help launch new, impactful initiatives aimed at empowering older adults and their families to remain healthy and connected within their communities.

In this final year of the campaign, the School of Nursing is positioned for continued success and growth. The investments made during the campaign will have a lasting impact not only on current students and faculty but on the future of nursing and health care as a whole.

The What Starts Here campaign has laid a strong foundation for the future of nursing, one that is rooted in innovation and excellence. But there is still more to be done. We encourage you to join us in supporting the School of Nursing during this final year of the campaign. Your support will continue to empower students, faculty, and research initiatives that improve healthcare and drive change in our communities. Together, we can continue to build a future where the next generation of nurses leads the charge in creating a healthier world for all.

Support the School of Nursing
Contact Chief Development Officer
Sergio Delgado
sdelgado@nursing.utexas.edu
512-694-8751

Cumulative Campaign Progress



Longhorn Nursing News

Faculty

Sarah Allison-Kolb, PhD, PMHNP, CS, RN, clinical associate professor, joined the School of Nursing in August 2025.

Amanda Alvarado, DNP, CPNP-AC, RN-C, clinical assistant professor, and **Shelli Kesler**, PhD, Dr. Mary Louise Adams Endowed Professor in Oncology Nursing, received the Dean's Excellence Awards in Teaching Innovation.

Katie Ayers, MS, BSN '10, RN, clinical instructor, joined the inaugural cohort of the Texas Well-being Faculty Ambassadors Program, launched by the Longhorn Wellness Center in Spring 2025.

Susan Calloway, PhD, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC, FAANP, clinical professor, PMHNP Program Coordinator, joined the School of Nursing in August 2025.

Lindsey Collins, MSN, RN, clinical instructor, joined the School of Nursing in August 2025.

Heather Cuevas, PhD '13, MSN '03, RN, ACNS-BC, FCNS, FAAN, was promoted to associate professor with tenure.

Chris Divin, PhD '15, RN, FNP-BC, clinical assistant professor, received the 2024 Texas Nurse Practitioners Educator of the Year award.

Janice Hernandez, DNP '17, MSN '09, BSN '04, FNP-C, clinical associate professor, was selected as a member of the Aspiring Leadership Academy's 2024–25 cohort.

Shalonda Horton, PhD '15, MSN '06, BSN, clinical assistant professor, and **Sharon Horner**, PhD, RN, FAAN, professor, received the Dean's Excellence Awards in Service.

Eun-Ok Im, PhD, MPH, RN, CNS, FAAN, dean, was appointed to the Maureen Healy Decherd '73 Distinguished Professorship in Nursing.

Karen Johnson, PhD, RN, FSAHM, FAAN, associate professor, received the School of Nursing Dean's Research Stimulus Pilot Award.

Stephanie Key, DNP, MSN '99, APRN, CPNP-PC, clinical assistant professor, was inducted as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners.

Linda Kim, PhD, MSN, RN, PHN, CPHQ, CGNC, FAAN, was named a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing. She was also honored with the DAISY Nurse Leader Award and the AAPINA Outstanding Service Award for her dedicated service as AAPINA Secretary during 2023–24.

Jung Kwak, PhD, MSW, FGSA, associate professor, was awarded a Faculty Travel Planning Grant from Texas Global to support a cross-national collaboration aimed at advancing person-centered dementia care in aging societies.

Li-Chen Lin, PhD '09, RN, CNRN, was promoted to clinical associate professor and received a DAISY Award from the DAISY Foundation.

Nicole Murry, PhD '18, BSN '02, RN, clinical associate professor, was named assistant dean for undergraduate and pre-licensure education.

Nico Osier, PhD, BSN, BS, RN, was promoted to associate professor and was elected to the Open Education Conference Board of Directors.

Carolyn Phillips, PhD '19, RN, ACNP, AOCNP, assistant professor, was recognized as one of the Texas Nurses Association's Outstanding Texas Nurses for 2025. She also received the Dean's Excellence Award in Scholarship.

Kelly Pretorius, PhD '19, MPH, MSN, BSN '07, APRN, CPNP-A/C & P/C, RN, received the Early Science Investigator Award from the Southern Nursing Research Society.

Kavita Radhakrishnan, PhD, MSEE, RN, FAAN, FAHA, associate dean for research, was promoted to professor and appointed to the Dolores V. Sands Chair in Nursing Research. She received the Mid-Career Researcher Award from the Southern Nursing Research Society. She was also inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame.

Ana Todd, PhD '13, RN, was promoted to clinical associate professor. She also received the Dean's Excellence Award in Global Community Nursing.

Whitney Trotter, DNP, PHMNP-BC, RDN/LDN, clinical assistant professor, joined the School of Nursing in August 2025.

Verónica García Walker, PhD '14, MSN '84, BSN '82, RN, clinical assistant professor, and **Whitney Thurman**, PhD '18, MSN '07, RN, assistant professor, received the Dean's Excellence Awards in Research and Quality Improvement. García Walker was also awarded an R21 grant from the National Institutes of Health to explore the perceptions of aging women living with schizophrenia spectrum disorders in institutional settings.

Bo Xie, PhD, FGSA, was named the Lee and Joseph D. Jamail Endowed Professor in Nursing.

Linda Yoder, PhD, MBA, RN, AOCN, FAAN, FAMSN, professor emerita, was honored as a 2024 Fellow of the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses.

Cara Young, PhD, RN, FNP-C, FAANP, FAAN, associate professor, was named assistant dean for graduate and doctoral education. She also received the Dean's Excellence Award in Mentoring.

Julie Zuñiga, PhD '13, MSN, '06, RN, FAAN, associate professor, received the Latina Legacy Health and Wellness Award from Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Staff

Heather Becker, PhD, research scientist, received a Staff Service Award for 45 years of service at UT Austin.

Charla Carrington, assistant dean for administration, received a Staff Service Award for 25 years of service at UT Austin.

Sergio Delgado, chief development officer, received a 2024 Texas Development Award for Outstanding Performance.

Tracy Demchuk, EdD, senior director for graduate program advising & admissions, received the 2025 President's Outstanding Staff Award and the 2025 Texas Exes James W. Vick Award for Academic Advising.

Barbara Espinosa, medical assistant at the Children's Wellness Center, received the SON Star Award for Texas Nursing staff in May 2025.

Jaime Lee, chief of staff and communications, received an inaugural AACN Nursing Advancement Professionals Leadership Award on behalf of the School of Nursing and was elected to the Board of Directors of the Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Science (2026-2027).

Nicole Manley, MSN '22, RN, CHSE, CA-SANE, PhD candidate, was named director of the Simulation and Skills Center.

Jeanne Morriss, managing director of academic affairs, received a Staff Service Award for 10 years of service at UT Austin.

Alexsis Torres, senior program coordinator for clinical placements, received the SON Star Award for Texas Nursing staff in August 2025.

Vinh Nguyen, PhD, associate dean for student services, received a Staff Service Award for 20 years of service at UT Austin.

Students

Nancy Blanco, BSN, PhD student, received a prestigious three-year scholarship from ConTex-Conahcyt (Mexico's National Council of Humanities, Sciences and Technologies).

Emmaleigh Clark, BSN student, received the National Certificate of Merit from the National Court of Honor of Scouting America.

Namuun Clifford, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, PhD student, was selected as one of only 100 doctoral students across the U.S. and Canada to receive a \$25,000 Scholar Award from the Philanthropic Educational Organization Sisterhood. She also received a \$750 research grant from Sigma Theta Tau International's Epsilon Theta Chapter.

Stephanie Costa, AEMSN student, received St. David's South Austin Medical Center's first-ever Flower Bud award.

Arie Emde, MSN, APRN, AGCNS-BC, CCRN, and **Jessie Smith**, BSN, RN, CCRN, both AGCNS and DNP students, took home 1st and 2nd place, respectively, for the student poster competition at the 2025 National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists Annual Conference in March in Boston, Massachusetts.

Ayumi Fielden, MSN, RN, CCRN-K, CPAN, DNP student, received a scholarship from the American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses.

Dongmi Kim, BSN, RN, PhD student, was awarded a \$500 scholarship in recognition of her academic achievements and commitment to nursing leadership from Sigma Theta Tau International's Epsilon Theta Chapter

Aagath Shalini Leo, MSN Family Nurse Practitioner Program student, received a scholarship from Westminster—a senior living community in Austin—and the Martha C. Gooding Foundation for Compassionate Nursing to support her pursuit of a career in geriatric and gerontological nursing.

Alumni

Emma Cho, PhD '23, RN, lab assistant, received a \$750 research grant from Sigma Theta Tau International's Epsilon Theta Chapter.

Bertha Flores, PhD '12, RN, WHNP-BC, was named a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

Debra Kosko, DNP, MN, BSN '79, FNP-BC, FAANP, was named a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

Haylie Montemayor, BSN '25, received the Flower Bud Award at St. David's North Austin Medical Center.

Tonychris Nnaka, PhD '22, MPH, RN, CPH, was named a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

In Memoriam

Simone Janice Aiken, BSN '91, RN, passed away on June 29, 2025.

Patricia Kay Avant, RN, PhD, FNI, FAAN, passed away on June 11, 2025. She joined the School of Nursing as an assistant professor in 1978 and resigned from her position as a tenured associate professor in 2005.

Beverly A. Hall, PhD, FAAN, professor emerita, passed away on July 11, 2025. She served on the faculty at the School of Nursing from 1983-1999.

Donna Rolin, PhD, APRN, PMHCNS-BC, PMHNP-BC, passed away on July 7, 2025. She joined the School of Nursing faculty in 2012 and served as clinical associate professor and director of the Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program.

Rising Star Alumni Award:



Heather Cuevas, PhD '13, MSN '03, RN, ACNS-BC, FCNS, FAAN, associate professor in the clinical nurse specialist program at the School of Nursing, has been honored with the Rising Star Alumni Award. A proud Longhorn alumna, she earned her PhD and MSN from UT Austin and her BSN from Baylor University. Cuevas's research focuses on diabetes self-management and cognitive function, including her NIH/NINR-funded project, Cognitive Training for Diabetes Self-Management. Clinically, she specializes in endocrine disorders, practicing at the School of Nursing's Family Wellness Clinic. Beyond the clinic and classroom, she served on the Board of Directors of the Texas Clinical Nurse Specialists organization as past-president, reflecting her commitment to advancing nursing practice across the state.

Distinguished Alumni Award:



The School of Nursing is proud to honor **Fan-Hao Chou**, PhD '01, MSN, FAAN, senior vice president at Kaohsiung Medical University in Taiwan, with the Distinguished Alumni Award. A distinguished professor at Kaohsiung Medical University's College of Nursing, Chou has dedicated her career to advancing nursing education, maternal-child health and women's health, by combining clinical expertise, research and leadership. Chou earned her PhD in Nursing from the UT Austin, an MSN from National Taiwan University and a BSN from Kaohsiung Medical College. Her research has been recognized internationally, and she has received numerous national awards for teaching, innovation and professional excellence. Beyond her research, Chou has held leadership roles in professional nursing organizations and government committees, shaping nursing practice and policy.